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THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT.

A SERIES OF

SERMONS

ON THE

SACRIFICIAL AND MEDIATORIAL

CHARACTER OF THE SAVIOUR,

AS REVEALED

IN THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE HEBREWS.

BY

THE REV. JAMES SPENCER KNOX, A.M.

RECTOR OF MAGHERA, AND VICAR-GENERAL OF THE DIOCESE OF DERRY.

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TO

THE CHRISTIAN PUBLIC,

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES

ARE, WITH EQUAL HUMILITY AND AFFECTION,

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY THEIR

SINCERE FRIEND IN JESUS,

THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE design of the present work, as its title announces, is to lay before the Christian reader, in the method of consecutive argument, such a series of passages, selected from the Epistle to the Hebrews, as may progressively illustrate the Sacrifice and Mediation of our blessed Lord.

Towards the awful interest of these subjects, it would be the Author's most fervent solicitude to attract public attention. From the various imperfections of this, his endeavour to do so, he may feel no slight desire to withdraw it. Nor is he either unaware of the ordeal to which he exposes himself. So many abler pens have already developed the general plan of redemption, that any new effort is

likely to be looked on as superfluous, or tried by comparisons at once depressing and severe. The voice of inspiration has pronounced, that "it is a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment. Perhaps also, the verdict of calm reflection and enlightened intellect, might have recorded a similar decision. But, however the world may agree in the abstract sentiment, experience and observation plainly show, that few persons are indifferent to the praise or censure of their fellow-creatures. We will not assign limits to the guidance of divine grace, but we may unhesitatingly call in the testimony of all history to prove, that neither constitutional insensibility, nor the more ennobling influences of philosophic convictions have sufficed to extinguish these innate yearnings of the heart.

Now, the writer of these discourses is far from arrogating to himself an exemption from the dominion of human weakness; but rather knowing that he is "compassed about with many infirmities," prays that he may not be altogether deprived of a desire to promote God's glory through the feeble instrumentality of these pages.

His trust is, that the Giver of every good gift will bestow a measure of his grace upon all who ask in faith. His earnest hope, that even this poor offering may, through the heavenly favor, forward in some, however small degree, the power and coming of Christ's kingdom.

If the "Series of Sermons" composing the present work professed to treat of the entire Epistle, rather than confine their exposition to certain chosen passages, some previous notices of its authenticity and inspiration might perhaps have been expected.

Such an extended labour not falling within the writer's view, he feels himself exonerated from so serious an obligation.

Indeed the attempt would be no less needless, than, of necessity, diffusive. The present time may, in this instance, safely confide in the researches of the past. Men of piety and distinguished learning have long since placed the claim which the Epistle to the Hebrews asserts to the character of full inspiration, upon a basis, too firm to be overthrown by the infidel or the sophist; it has passed through the fiery trial of critical examination, unharmed and triumphant, and now, we trust, rests the endless sabbath amongst those "lively oracles" of God's word, which propose to the acceptance of a fallen world—the precious covenant of eternal salvation.

Possibly it may be asked, if these things be so, if the learned, and the pious, and the wise, have already travelled over this holy land of promise, what new discoveries can now be hoped for? what adequate inducements present themselves to stimulate industry, or reward laborious investigation?

These being questions of strict fairness, require

to be answered in a similar spirit. We reply, then, that if it follows, as of necessity, that those earlier writers who have explored, have likewise exhausted the rich mine of the everlasting gospel, no valid reasons can now remain for entering on the present undertaking. But the fact is quite otherwise. Far from sealing up the gospel fountain, its Eternal Author informed mankind through his prophets, that much clearer conceptions of divine truth would be bestowed on after ages, than on those periods in which they themselves lived.

Nor can we doubt now, that a higher and purer discernment of spiritual things is reserved for happier eras yet to come, when the power of godliness shall further prosper and prevail.

Over a large portion of the habitable world, no ray of salvation is seen to shine—in much besides, it is still but as a light, which shineth in a dark place, to shine, we humbly trust, more and more until the perfect day. And many a passage of the written word, over which the carnal mind of evil generations has drawn the funeral pall of their own corruption, will come forth from the grave whereunto man's grossness would fondly consign them, clothed in the glorious apparel of unveiled majesty, and open truth. Surely no voice pronounces to the seeking church—thus far shalt thou go, and no further. No blast from above withers the hand

reached forth "for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus."

Few are the prospects on which the mind of the believer rests with more complacency, than on the encouraging hope, that God will continually vouchsafe new manifestations of himself to those who devoutly, and led by his own Spirit, search after him. It cannot be otherwise regarded, than as of most cheering and consolatory expectation, whether considered in a general point of view, and as affecting the eternal interests of all mankind, or as special to the individual's own happiness. In either case we discern a nearer approach to the promised time, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. That such a work is in operation over the face of our sublunary world is plain to every observer; a work subject indeed to alternations of advancement, or delay, or in some periods, to partial retrogression; but still in progress, and designed to progress until the ultimate issue of all things shall arrive. It is unquestionable, that sufficient evidence exists to prove, that even in those gloomy centuries, when dark superstition, and its invariable concomitant, corruption of morals, lorded it over God's heritage; even then, his written word was slowly unfolding itself, and his Holy Spirit influencing the hearts of those pious men, who themselves, surrounded as they were with difficulties

or in after ages, their more free descendants, manifested the development of the wisdom that is from above.

But, distinct from the hoped-for expansion of the spiritual faculties (if so we may term it) of mankind, are other grounds on which a great increase of Scripture knowledge may be expected. Our anticipations are derived from the inexhaustible character of the revealed word. While in numbers and in certain sciences, the utmost amount to which combination is practicable may become the subject of demonstration, and it would be considered an ignorant waste of time to pursue the investigation of established relations beyond already ascertained limits, no analagous restrictions control scriptural inquiry. This is plain; and from this property it follows, that writers of very moderate pretensions are frequently observed to impart more correct conceptions of the word of life, than hitherto adopted. This power of elucidation is truly the gift of the Spirit, and one of its operations, and in ascribing to man a secondary workmanship, we must not be understood to detract from the primal source; such intention is here entirely rejected, but it is asserted to be a characteristic feature of the devout study of Scripture—that the Spirit doth so enlighten inferior capacities, as to enable their possessors not unfrequently to contribute largely and usefully to the development of its obscurities.

Still it is a received opinion, to the deterring of many timid persons, that no novelty is now attainable, in the investigation or setting forth of the gospel.

If by novelty we understand something, of which no portion has ever before entered into the heart of man to conceive, we may be tempted to exclaim, with the wise man of old, that "there is nothing new under the sun." But novelty of view, that is, a novel mode of examining a question, is not of such hopeless acquisition.

For instance, were it demonstrable, that in theology, as in chemistry, the introduction of a new ingredient into any given compound might possibly alter entirely the quality of the results, it would follow, that each discovery at which greater illumination might arrive, would have, at least, a tendency to modify or change previous conclusions. The effect of such change or modification is equivalent to the introduction of a new subject, for it operates directly upon the subsequent reasoning, and compels to a renunciation of the basis upon which that reasoning had been supported.

Thus the subject becomes in fact new, for every purpose of instruction or inference.

In like manner, and by the same argument, it ensures that the withdrawal of any portion of a series of proofs from the whole sum, would also change the consequences, and the inferences, or

instruction, as in the former instance, become, not merely altered in point of fact, but in the strictest sense new.

These effects are not beyond the province of mediocrity to produce. Through such means the knowledge of Scripture becomes more diffused and advanced. Swelled by the continual inflowings of many tributary streams, the mighty river of truth rolls on, ever increasing in its progress, and more and more fertilizing the regions over which its vast waters spread.

Will it not also be granted, that wherever leisure, or opportunity, or habits of thought, present an apparent occasion to the anxious Christian, of casting his mite into the treasury of the heavenly temple, he should feel himself constrained to offer it, by the strongest impulses of duty and love?

Higher than to such pretensions as above referred to, the author of this work does not aspire—nor desire to be led by other motives than those last put forth.

Some of the passages, used as texts of the following discourses, have been already treated on, (as what of holy writ has not,) by distinguished writers. Possibly, though unknown to the author, pious and learned men may have discussed them all; still, according to our previous reasoning, this fact ought not to deter from renewed promulgation,

while any probability remains of further discovery of the mind of the Spirit.

Besides, from what has been stated, it will have appeared, that the object of the present endeavour is accomplished, rather through the connexion of parts, in a consequential series, than by the exposition of any isolated doctrine.

In pursuing this method, respect has been had to the argument and character of the Epistle itself.

Now, the design of the apostle who wrote it appears to be—after establishing the predicted incarnation and priesthood of our blessed Lord, to maintain and develop "The one only sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world, from its first offering upon the cross, until its final accepted state in heaven.

Such being the intent of the inspired Author, he opens his labours by a declaration that God, who, in times past, had spoken by the prophets, now addresses mankind "by his Son," (i. 1,) which Son was "made lower than the angels," that "he should taste death for every man," (ii. 9,) and being also a brother, and a high priest, should, by that death, "make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (ii. 17.)

The apostle next calls on all believers, "to consider *that* high priest of their profession," (iii. 1,) in his attributes of faithfulness and holiness,—who having accomplished the required sacrifice upon

earth, wherein he was himself at once priest and victim, is now "set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens," (viii. 1,) for the gracious purpose of "appearing in the presence of God for us," (ix. 24,) to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (ix. 26.)

Now, according to the office of our high priest, it was necessary that the worshippers being reconciled by his death, should draw nigh to God, which they would not do, until he, the priest, had "perfected for ever, them that are sanctified," (x. 14,) as he did by his "one offering."

Hence, as we are further told, believers may now "draw near in full assurance of faith." (x. 22.)

Higher hopes, more full of immortality, and promises more exceeding precious, were beyond the power of man's heart to conceive. Therefore doth the apostle warn all men who hear the voice that calleth to such glory and virtue, to beware that "they refuse not him that speaketh from heaven," (xii. 25,)—nor yet, that they omit to avail themselves of the privilege which their high priest has procured for them; namely, to "offer (by him) the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." (xiii. 15.)

Finally, he concludes the whole series of instructive admonition, with an affectionate farewell. Commending his disciples to the God of peace, who

had brought their great Shepherd again from the dead, and praying that he would make them perfect in every good work to do his will. (xiii. 20.)

But the object will be more clearly attained by an insertion of the respective texts at full length, marking in italics the portion of each peculiarly applicable to the progressive argument.

" *God*, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, *hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son.*—Heb. i. 1, 2.

But we see *Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels* for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. *That he by the grace* OF GOD *should taste death for every man.* Heb. ii. 9.

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be *made like unto his brethren*, that he might be *a merciful and faithful high priest* in things pertaining to God, *to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.* Heb. ii. 17.

Wherefore, *holy brethren*, partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.* Heb. iii. 1.

Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum : we have such an high priest, *who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.* Heb. viii. 1.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places,

made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now *to appear in the presence of God for us.* Heb. ix. 24.

But now, once in the end of the world, hath he appeared, *to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* Heb. ix. 26.

For by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Heb. x. 14.

Having, therefore, *brethren,* boldness to *enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*—by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, *in full assurance of faith,* having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Heb. x. 19, &c.

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven. Heb. xii. 25.

Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, *let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.* Heb. xii. 28.

By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually—that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. Heb. xiii. 15.

Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

The foregoing passages appear to comprise the general design of the Apostle, and if well understood, are sufficient for the double object of elucidating the Epistle as a composition in itself, independent of the other inspired productions of the same pen, as also of laying before believers a compendious view of the nature and efficacy of Christ's priestly office.

Christians seem for the most part tolerably well acquainted with the nature of that office, in reference to its exercise, or conceived exercise on earth. That he offered himself a voluntary victim, for the sins of mankind, to represent and undergo in his own person the penalties due to the transgression of God's laws, and to satisfy by the sacrifice of himself, the debt of guilt; these revealed truths are apprehended and acknowledged—and if the scheme of redemption went no further, neither need our pastoral exposition.

But surely we study Scripture to little purpose, if our notions of redemption expire with the

Saviour upon the cross. And yet it is to be feared, that many, even devout persons, imagine that the sacrifice then made, completed the offering for sin, and are ready, though in a most erroneous sense, to exclaim with the dying victim, "it is finished."

Indeed, in a certain limited acceptation, it was finished. The mortal sufferings of the Son of God were ended; no more was it demanded of him to endure the agonies of that sorrowful night, when tears of blood fell from his anguished brow. The scene of insult, mockery, and torture, was not to be repeated. Death had set him free from this sad obligation, and thus it was finished.

But though the victim was slain, there remained still another act to be performed, without which, the passion and death had availed nothing for man's salvation.

The victim was slain, but the priest's office was unfulfilled. The bleeding lamb was still without "the vail," and it was indispensible that it should be brought within it; consequently our Saviour's death did not finish his sacrifice, until he had ascended into heaven, and presented as priest the body in which he suffered as victim, within the "holiest of all." Further, it was requisite that this sacrifice should be accepted, before we could receive the "full assurance of faith." Some writers have alleged, that the darkness spread over the land, and the other supernatural appearances which,

while they fulfilled prophecy, gave also attestation to the deep enormity of the guilt of those wicked men who "killed the prince of life," signified the acceptance of the sacrifice.

But by what reasoning can this vague notion be sustained? Not certainly by any reference to the prefiguring types then fulfilled, or by any analogy drawn from the nature of sacrifice.

The weight of testimony and inference lies rather in the other scale; for we will have observed, that on those occasions of our Redeemer's life, when evidences of the divine approbation and acceptance were given, occasions too, of vastly inferior moment to that now under consideration, a voice from heaven announced the pleasure of the Holy One, in distinct terms of expressive acknowledgment. In the instance of the sacrifice upon the cross, so far was our Saviour from being sustained by such assurances, that he complains of the absence of some sensible sign certifying the divine favor and support.

We therefore cannot assume from the passages which detail the crucifixion, that the victim was accepted. Now, so long as the victim remained unaccepted, it is plain, that the covenant of salvation was unfinished, and we must therefore look further in search of the acts of the Saviour which constituted his finished work.

These acts, so momentous, and so important to

our eternal interests, are revealed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in a regular connected series of progressive consequences. The Apostle advances from the view of Christ crucified to a full display of all his subsequent offices, exclusive of his final judgment of the world.

The principal, because distinctive instruction afforded in this Epistle, seems to consist in the gradual disclosure of the mysteries of salvation. First, the sacrifice upon the cross; next, the presentation of the victim, within the holiest of all; and lastly, the mode and character of the Mediator, with which the accepted sacrifice intercedes for a world ransomed by his death from the guilt and punishment of sin.

It is well known, that much diversity of opinion exists, touching the particular last alluded to.

Many conceive of the ascended Saviour, that he now standeth, as Stephen descried him, at the right hand of God, occupied in continued entreaties in behalf of man. That he unceasingly implores the Eternal First Cause to pardon sinners, and that the *voice* of his entreaty is heard in heaven.

But no where in the written word do we discover direct authority for this conclusion. We would be understood to treat here of that portion only of Christ's mediation; for every believer feels a lively hope, nay, a full assurance that the ascended Saviour, as head over all things to his church, does

ever exhibit a visible interest in its welfare, and strengthen and promote the happiness of its members, before the throne, and before the spirits of the just made perfect.

The Holy Scriptures declare, that Christ will so come again to judge the world, as he has gone away from it, with the same body he had while on earth. But they do not say that our Advocate is now pleading orally with that body, before the throne. The Advocate, in so far as is revealed to us, does indeed plead, and pleads effectually for all who believe in him; he pleads by the exhibition of his wounded body and pierced hands and feet, which in silence proclaim before a covenant God the accomplishment of the one great propitiatory sacrifice.

Somewhat more at large upon this topic will be found in the following discourses—it is therefore unnecessary to dilate further in this place. The subject, however, is of the very deepest importance. Upon a due apprehension of it will, in fact, depend the value and correctness of our prayers, for we can never pray as we ought to the Father through Christ, until we know in what circumstances Christ is placed, and how he procures a hearing and acceptance of the prayers we offer. Thus far seems plain to every comprehension, that when the offering for sin has been accepted—and the acceptance, we know, was announced by the descent of the Holy Spirit—a supplicatory intercessor would

be a needless supernumerary to the office already fulfilled. It cannot surely be, that it should now be required at Christ's hands, to implore that forgiveness, which his own obedience unto death merited, nor would it either seem quite consistent with his enjoyment of present glory.

To see Jesus as he is, in his crucified body, our mediator and intercessor, must ever constitute the principal desire and prayer of the believer, who, however lamenting that he now seeth darkly, is yet assured that, it is by the steps of Christ's altar only, that his prayers ascend to the footstool of eternal grace.

Little is said in this work concerning the human nature of our Lord. The public will perceive a ready cause for this omission in the recent treatment of that subject, by a minister of Christ—whose convincing exposition of the great article of Protestant confession, would need a far better pen than this to convey in any measure the writer's lasting thankfulness for the consolation its perusal has afforded him, and his deep persuasion of its intrinsic worth.

On the doctrine of our Lord's humanity, as somewhat, however, is said, a brief notice may be permitted here. There does not appear any difficulty, the author's mind at least experiences none, in conceiving that Christ may have partaken of the incidents annexed to human flesh, without being tainted by a single stain of sin.

The desire for sleep or food, weariness, pain of body or mind, sorrow, joy, love, seem not to be necessarily connected with a sinful state of being. For aught we distinctly know, the heavenly hosts themselves are liable to several of these wants and passions, nor does Scripture contradict the supposition. But, rather, whatsoever is revealed of their state, whether in heaven, or during a temporary sojourn upon earth, tends to convey the impression that in these points some affinity to our own condition may exist.

The student of the word will at once discern to what these allusions refer. It will perhaps be said, that in the instances of those heavenly visitors, though in truth they evinced a capacity to act consistently with the wants and habits of beings endued with bodily organs—still that they did so, not in a celestial nature, which for a time they laid aside, but in a terrestrial nature, which for a time they had assumed. We can merely say, that it is generally difficult, and often useless, to answer gratuitous conjectures. But at the same time, it becomes us to confess, that the mode of laying aside, and resuming at will the heavenly form, or the incorporating it with the human, far surpasses the limited comprehension of our finite powers. In like manner, the redemption of our mortal part from the dominion of corruption, and the investiture of its glorified substance with the mantle of immortality,

however precious to the heart of the believer, can yet affect his mind with no very distinct images of their reality.

In truth, we are necessarily but imperfect judges of what is meant either by the miraculous assumption of the external form of man, by the angelic natures, or that no less marvellous assurance, concerning our bodies, that mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

Moved by these reasons the author has but lightly touched on the foregoing topics in the course of this work—not that he undervalues their importance, but their details appearing to him to be inexplicable by human language, he has addressed himself to matters, which to his eyes are equally interesting, and more distinct.

After all, whither does our exposition, or whither do our hopes tend? With all believers let us say—Christ crucified is our only theme—Christ to the Jews, and to the nominal professors of every age, a stumbling block—Christ to the philosopher, foolishness—these truths only are designed to sanctify our pages, we desire no higher knowledge, nor cherish any livelier hopes.

These truths are alone deserving of a Christian man's pursuit; all other subjects are valueless; every other labour unsatisfactory and vain, and every other thought which engrosses the mind, and every other love which beats in the bosom, sinks into

utter nothingness, before the knowledge and the love of him, whom to know and love is life eternal.

If herein be set forth but one new motive to urge one wavering soul to tread the thorny way, trodden before by Christ and his apostles, or motives preexisting be strengthened and confirmed —if in the mind of but one life-seeking fellow Christian, the half-formed persuasion assume a character more developed and distinct—if the truth as it is in Jesus acquire, even to one, that dominion over the hidden man of the heart, to which the saving grace of God designed it—then truly will a recompence have been allotted to this endeavour, far above all that human approval can bestow.

Perhaps these are idle hopes—visions of the fancy, unreal and vain. In truth, they may well so be; the energy of self-deception, prostrates every opposing barrier of the judgment, and wins an entry into every mind.

From this dominion, no mortal ever has been, ever can be free. Yet one source of gratification and comfort will continue to flow, with whose unfailing waters the world cannot intermeddle— whatsoever be the fate of these discourses, whether they be appointed, through God's grace to turn souls to righteousness, or that they pass, like many others, of superior interest and value, into the stillness of oblivion—the truths they imperfectly treat of will not fail, Christ's word will not pass away.

The doctrines contained in this Epistle must ever constitute the Alpha and Omega of a Christian's hope, and dwell richly in his heart by faith.

Christ on Calvary, and Christ in heaven, Christ our justifying righteousness, risen for us, Christ our mediator and advocate ascended for us, and sitting at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

SERMON I.

HEBREWS, i. 1.

"God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past, unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son."

IN recommending to your devout meditation the first verse of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, I refrain from any minute verbal criticism. It, however, becomes us to notice that the word in the original, which our translators have rendered sundry times, would more strictly import, sundry *parts* or *portions*—a meaning not contradictory, but quite distinct. Either version represents faithfully God's dealings with his creatures; but the last-named conveys with greater accuracy the design entertained by the apostle, of instituting a comparison between the mode of communicating the divine scheme, as well in the period antecedent to the

advent of our Saviour, as when that blessed epoch had arrived. It pleased him of whom cometh every good and every perfect gift to make known his will, as the apostle expresses it, "in parts," "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little." With our limited faculties, we cannot presume to fathom the motives which swayed the Eternal Intelligence in manifesting himself to the Jews, in so limited a measure. It behoves us rather to adore the merciful loving kindness of God, who in every age bore witness of himself within the consciences of man, and at length, in the fulness of time, made known his saving health unto all nations. For so soon as the occasion for this reserve had passed away, the sun of righteousness arose, and the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, appeared unto all men.

The law as a schoolmaster brought men to Christ, and Christ fulfilled in himself the requirements of the law. Yet neither did Christ think fit to impart all mysteries to his apostles, for he well knew their carnal apprehensions were unequal to sustain them. Secret counsels still remained laid up in the bosom of the Father, which the Son deferred revealing, till the Spirit from above should sanctify the vessels chosen as depositories.

Yet, the *plan* of redemption was *all* unfolded, no concealment diminished its boundaries, nor did any introduction of other dispensations mar its distinct-

ness. Justification through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus, was clearly announced, and the one only foundation was visibly laid in the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. So far, then, Saint Paul may be regarded as instituting a comparison of degree only, between the partial revelations vouchsafed the prophets, and the free effusion of the waters of life in the Saviour. Hence, if this opinion be correct, it becomes somewhat a subject of regret, that our version should not offer a more exact translation of the original term referred to above. It has been further remarked, that this epistle wants the prefixed name of Paul, which is attached to his other writings. Such an omission, whether designed or otherwise, would afford no argument against its inspiration; or if it did, would equally affect the works of the evangelists who wrote the life of our blessed Lord. But we need not now defend the genuineness of this epistle, which the general consent of antiquity has affirmed. Early received into the canon of Scripture, and admired for the sublimity of its style, no less than revered, as promulgating doctrines of awful and mysterious depth, the epistle to the Hebrews has passed unharmed through the ordeal of criticism, and withstood unshaken the assaults of infidelity. To the Jews a stumbling-block, their doctors could neither escape nor despise; to the Greeks foolishness, yet victorious over their philosophy; to us,

that are saved, the power, the persuasion, and the wisdom of God.—God, saith the apostle, hath spoken. The voice has gone forth which called together the slumbering elements of nature and combined them in one vast harmonious system, fixed in order, in beauty, and unchanging laws—the same voice which was heard commanding light to shine on the darkness of the unformed world—the still small voice, which thrills through our own warring members, and speaks of an influence beyond their miserable lusts—that voice spoke. May God, in the richness of his mercy, grant that we despise not him that speaketh from heaven. May he give us grace to approach the subject before us, impressed with a due sense of its serious importance. For so only, shall the words of eternal life be graven upon our hearts—so only, shall the right seed which God hath sown bring forth fruit unto salvation.

We are tempted to exclaim with the Psalmist, "Lord, what is man that thou carest for him, or the son of man that thou so regardest him?" But we feel and know, that he, unseen by whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground, hath not left himself without a witness in the human breast. Hence hath he spoken in sundry times, and in divers manners, to men in every age; to the fathers and to ourselves.

All men have been warned, therefore, all men may in justice be condemned, if they prove disobedient to the heavenly admonitions.

When we direct our thoughts upon the sundry times in which God has spoken to his creatures, the mind affectionately reverts to that first revelation of himself, vouchsafed in the garden of Eden. God is there represented as bestowing a blessing upon the primal stock of the human family, "and watering it from the fountain of his eternal love," and God blessed them and said "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it." Now, though this gracious command was quickly followed by the curse under which the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain—until now, yet even through those clouds wherein the divine anathema still hoarsely murmurs, the rays of mercy and the promise of redemption are seen to shine; and He who remembers that we are but dust, gave the early and precious assurance, that the seed of sinful woman should bruise the serpent's head; so soon is the tender love of Jehovah displayed towards fallen man; so early and so merciful the voice of God. But not alone in promises, or audible to mortal ears, was that voice heard, for it manifested as well the denunciations, the judgments, and the admonitions of Jehovah, when declared by visions or by sensible signs. Scripture shows us that these manifestations fully accomplished the apparent objects for which they were made; for the voice of God gave no uncertain sound. It is superfluous to dwell upon their multiplicity, as the memory of every student of

Holy Writ will furnish him with an ample supply of familiar instances. In fact, the treasury of heavenly love seems, as it were, exhausted by the lavish expenditure of divine, sensible guidance, or presence. If Enoch, in the following of a holy life, walked with God, we are informed that God condescended to take him to himself. If Noah found favor in his sight—that favour was proclaimed by the most stupendous revelation recorded in the sacred Canon, save that of man's redemption. The end of all flesh was come by reason of its violence, and a wild waste of desolating waters was about to overspread the world, when Noah, righteous in his generation, received the injunction to enter into the ark. Grace gave to Abraham the privilege, through faith, to see the day of Christ afar off. Isaac, by the impress from on High, blessed the posterity, from which the promised seed should come. Jacob pointed to the sceptre of Judah's king; and Joseph, alone and unbefriended in the court of the Egyptian monarch, seemed a prey to every temptation, and the victim of every wrong, yet was not alone or friendless, for "the Lord was with Joseph." What more shall we say? for time would fail us, to tell of Moses, David, Daniel; men who obtained promises, and lived in good report. These all are sure witnesses of the truth declared by the apostle in the text; and though, indeed, they did not obtain the fulfilment of the promises given,

because it was decreed that they without us should not be made perfect, "yet did they witness of these better things which we inherit." Perhaps it may have been observed that the apostle rather treats of the communications made to the fathers, by, or in, the prophets, than of the immediate revelation which they received themselves. Such does indeed appear to be his meaning; but I considered it useful to trace, thus briefly, the progress of the divine revelation through the holy men of old—not as displaying more clearly the good things to come, but as an evidence that God had spoken at sundry times, or in many parts.

Nor truly was the voice from the excellent glory ever utterly silent, nor erring man ever altogether abandoned by the divine counsel. The Epistle to the Romans assures us that his thoughts and conscience supplied the deficiency of immediate teaching, and bore witness to the existence and to the attributes of God. If it be demanded, why God should rather select the prophets as expositors of his counsels, than impart them through public and general intimations; we answer, that God seems, with few, and these easily explained, exceptions, to have chosen the promulgators of his doctrines from amongst those, whose lives were in conformity with his will. Hence our Saviour makes the knowledge of the doctrine conditional upon the performance of the heavenly will. Now, these

prophets had walked according to the light that was in them, a holy course, either their consciences being a law unto themselves; or else, as is probable, in so far as concerns the antediluvian and ante-Mosaic holy men, the knowledge of the Supreme Being was transmitted, with much distinctness, from generation to generation. We may further consider, that the prophets of old did not possess the written word to appeal to, in support of their admonitions. The memory of earlier mercies, or judgments, did indeed furnish a strong and often-used argument by Moses and his followers; but the primitive saints had not this support to rely on. Abel, Enoch, Noah, may each in turn have promulgated the truths of which they were persuaded in their own minds; but, as far as is revealed in Scripture, the force of their reasoning was sustained by no extrinsic authority—it stood alone. Hence, it was necessary that the personal character of the preacher of righteousness should command respect, and consequently these men were selected from among the believers of their age. It may truly be said, for Scripture avers it, that "all flesh had corrupted its way." Now, we are justified in concluding, that these men were less polluted, at least with the prevailing idolatry, than the surrounding world; and yet it is clear, that amid the prevailing depravity, even the comparatively unaffected would suffer: they would sustain a spiritual injury: the relish for heavenly impulses

would be exposed to a fearful contest with human passion; and even the evidence by which these impulses were accompanied, subject to distrust and doubt. For example, a revelation communicated by a vision, might risk being confounded with superstitious impressions, if no previous persuasion had conducted to the inference that a spiritual being presided over nature—nor without some antecedent convictions, would any great likelihood exist, either of obedience, or even of a full conception of what the heavenly intimation suggested. From this it is plain, that the capacity to receive or propound sacred precepts was the lot of very few, even in an imperfect degree, and therefore the divine manifestations were limited in extent, and bestowed upon a small number of men, who in the language of the Apostle, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The same causes which may have directed the limitation of the divine communications, are likely to have exercised an influence upon the people at large, for whom those secret communications were designed. Similar blindness would naturally conduct to similar perplexity. Thus we learn that the sacrifice of that innocent lamb which Abel slew, and which we might think plainly suited to foreshow the one oblation once offered for the sins of the whole world, failed, in at least one remarkable case, to effect that blessed purpose. To us, reasoning abstractedly, it would appear that

a knowledge of the transgression through which his parents were expelled paradise, and by whose consequences he had been assured, their children and posterity were tainted with sin, might tend to dispose the mind of the unhappy Cain towards grasping eagerly at any remedy. But we find that the inferences he drew were of a complexion altogether different and fatal.

Similar impediments marred the usefulness of Noah; he was truly a righteous plant, set in the dry wilderness of an untoward generation—an appropriate voice to proclaim impending wrath—but an unheeded one; despite all warning, men dug, and planted, and sowed, and reaped, and married, and were given in marriage, till the flood came and destroyed them all.

So much for the voice of God speaking through holy men of old in the earliest times. When the law had been propounded from Mount Sinai, and a settled system of church polity was established, prophecy itself seems to have undergone a change or modification, conformable to a more fixed order of things. Inspired men did indeed arise from time to time, as before, intent upon admonishing both monarch and people, and zealous to reclaim them from idolatry, and to avert, through national repentance, the punishments denounced against sin. These occurrences were indeed common to both periods; but to the later epochs a distinction was

vouchsafed, and a benefit bestowed, by whose steady light many believers were enabled to walk—I refer to the schools of prophecy established at Bethel and Jericho—Saul is recorded to have visited them, and it is even surmised that the city last named owed the healing of its noxious waters by Elisha the prophet, (2 Kings, ii. 21,) to his sense of the advantages accruing from such a seminary, which we learn belonged to it. We see therefore, that as men became more settled in rule, God ordained a more definite system of conveying the notification of his behests. The inmates of these prophetic schools, or sons of the prophets, as they were called, were not only seers into futurity when the gifts of the Spirit through which they spake had been stirred up by application and prayer—they likewise expounded the holy word to the people, speaking upon, and declaring the lively oracles of God. Here. then, we possess sufficient proof of the care which a Father of Mercies bestowed upon the religious instruction of that stubborn race he would fain have retained within the fold of his love. The mighty scheme of redemption was progressing with uniform pace, and still as its mysteries drew nearer to their accomplishment, the sure word of prophecy spake in a louder and more convincing tone; and the light which beamed from its lamps shed an augmented lustre, as though it would outvie the day-star's glorious dawn. And God spake likewise

in divers manners, or as has been already intimated in many portions, gradually developing the divine plan. It is probably to the adoption of this mode, that is owing the abolition of idolatrous worship, after the return from the Babylonish captivity. The people had become more enlightened through the joint agency of misfortune and instruction; as further ground for this opinion we may adduce the increasing expectation of Messiah's advent, prevalent among the nation, which we may, I think, reasonably conclude, arose from the clearer announcements of the later prophets. But God did also, and early speak in divers manners. Hear him as he is recorded by Moses to have made himself known, (Numb. xii. 5, 6,) "And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forth, and he said, hear now my words, if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." Such was the promise made to *any* prophet, who might have belonged to the congregation, but to the leader, Moses, a diverse manner and higher distinction was accorded. "With him," saith God, "will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." Here, then, is an example of God speaking in divers manners *to* the prophets;

Scripture is express and abundant as to the manners in which he spake *by* them—manners so plainly accommodated to the varying wants, and circumstances, and even the capacities of the people, as fully evince his unwearied desire to bring them to himself. In truth, all the appointed observances were so many manners of speaking; the daily sacrifice, the solemnities of the passover, and the other annual festivals may justly be regarded as distinct notifications, calculated to impart and preserve the knowledge of Jehovah. Nor were they unavailing to this end—if they did not altogether dispel the gloom which hung over the enactments of the law, they at least afforded a beacon, towards which the tempest-tossed might steer; a complete dispersion of the vapours which rested upon the hill of Sion was not yet decreed, but some rays pierced their misty wreaths, and foreshowed the perfect day.

Again, the means of explanation resorted to by the prophets, supports the assertion of the apostle; thus, metaphor, imagery, the objects of nature and of art, are in turns produced, as they appear best suited to accomplish the objects in view.

As instances of such methods, Micah pushing with his horns, and Jeremiah hiding his girdle, may perhaps suggest themselves. But enough has probably been already said upon this portion of our text: no one will deny, that the apostle is warranted

in declaring that God did, in divers manners and in sundry times, speak unto our fathers by the prophets, to their understandings, to their hearts, even to their fancy, with all that the fondest love could dictate, or tenderest interest and boundless compassion inspire.

Thirdly. We now come to another, and that the last and greatest dispensation. The last days, as the apostle calls it, conformable to the Jewish phraseology. Whatsoever of ancient type denoted a Saviour, was now necessarily terminated, by the presence of the object foreshown; whatsoever of law or ceremonial prepared the way or guided the expectation, was now no longer required, for Christ himself had appeared; in him all was fulfilled, and by him was wrought in every believing mind a full demonstration of the object and person to whom these manifestations pointed. From him proceeded that voice, declared to us by the apostle as concluding but not extinguishing, as supporting but not superseding, as joined in fullest harmony with the former voices of holy men of old. That voice which was heard in joyful accents at the creation, and gladdened Eden with its tones. That same voice which mourned in the garden of Gethsemane over the sins of a fallen world—that voice which now pleads even for the world so fallen—high in the

midst of the garden of the paradise of God. The God whom we worship, whom they saw afar off, who speaks to us, God's beloved Son.

The apostle does not seem to entertain the design of instituting an adverse comparison between the voice of God speaking in the old time by the prophets, and the same voice speaking now by his beloved Son; as little to add to the avowed distinction any opposition, as though a variance could exist between them. His object is evidently to strengthen and reconcile both, through their mutual enforcement—as is appositely denoted by our Saviour in the parable, wherein the husbandmen are represented as successively ill-treating the servants of the lord of the vineyard, and finally putting his son to death.

Now in that parable, the mission of the servants and of the son were of strictly similar import. In like manner, in the question before us, the prophets testified of Christ and Christ appealed to prophecy in proof of his own divine descent and mission, not indeed composing an inconclusive circle of vicious argument, but being in truth mutual yet independent supporters one of the other. The former as predicting events which no human energies could fulfil, the latter as fulfilling events, which no human sagacity could have predicted. Likewise, in the instance of the rich man's brethren, it is dictinctly intimated that the testimony of Moses

and the prophets is equivalent to that of the Lord of life, in this express declaration, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Yet we may not deny that a livelier call to holiness is made when Christ speaketh, for his voice came as the consummation of all warning—the ray which still should linger in the evening of the last day, when, as is told by Moses (Deut. iv. 30 and 31,) "If thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice, he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them." Thus was it that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv. 4 and 5.) And again, to the Ephesians, (i. 9, 10.) "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." Now, these Scriptures do well pourtray the dignity of that voice which in these last days speaketh by the Son. It speaketh by the first tones of his infancy, and by his last intercessory exclamation upon the cross, by his blameless life, by his stupendous miracles, by

baptism and circumcision, by cross and passion, by precious death and burial, by glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost. So speaks the ever-blessed Son, in whom the Father is well pleased; and with what language doth he address us—in what soothing words of peace and love, and joy, is the message of gospel gladness conveyed to man—no more a cloudcapp'd Sinai trembles to its base at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth—no more the dread commands of the Eternal, encircled with smoke and flame, pour forth their fearful sanctions with earthquake and with thunder, nor shake the world with the ministration of death—God speaks now through that Son who took our nature upon him, for our sakes came down from heaven, for us became a man of sorrows, for us died upon the cross, and for us rose again to earth, and thence to heaven. It is by him that God now speaks and ever will speak; the last days, the ends of the world are come upon us, the consummation of ages, the final dispensation to which the prophets pointed, the unveiling of those mysteries into which angels desired to look, all these things are come to pass, and all with voices blended in a common harmony make a joint appeal.

The chorus has been swelling ever since the creation; saint, prophet, martyr, each in turn have joined it; nor ceased the harp its chords, or voice

its trill, till that bright hour when angels, a heavenly host, lent their support, and simple shepherds heard the hallowed song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." And say, my Christian friends, if the glory here spoken of be not loved in that full measure, by sinful man, to which its eternal object may lay claim, if that fair promise of peace and good will seems, as it were, effaced by the sword; and strife, and anger, and dissension, take its place, on what or whom shall we fasten the blame of such a failure? Not surely on the gospel of Jesus; its language leads, and can lead to no misconception of this nature; nor yet on him who preached it. He who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, threatened not, when persecuted, blest his persecutors, and even offered up an extenuatory supplication in behalf of those, by whose wicked hands he was crucified and slain.

He is not obnoxious to the charge of preaching a discord which the whole tenor of his life was calculated to discountenance.

Alas! we may discover, in other sources, the fountain, whose polluting streams mingle with, and poison the waters of life; and then ascertain why even this, the last and holiest dispensation, doth ofttimes present its free grace in vain.

The love of God, the obedience of Christ, the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, all combined, dis-

play themselves in the message which God speaketh by the Son, and severally record their title to the affectionate reverence of mankind, they form in good truth, the "cloud of witnesses" which surround us, and justly may it be required, that we "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. xii. 1, 2.) And this is he through whom God now speaketh, who for ou sakes, divested himself of the glory, which he had with the Father, before the world was, and became for a season, lower than the angels, that he might exalt us to everlasting life. "See, (saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 25,) that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." Here, indeed, we discover a superiority in the revelation which the Son makes, over any prior manifestation by the prophets. And doubtless the apostle has led us thitherward, as to the last step of the ascent, which conducts to full conviction, a summit, from whose airy, and lightsome elevation the whole land of heavenly promise is descried. For Christ speaketh from heaven, to whose happy

courts he has gone before—and enforces his precious words, by a continual outpouring of that free grace with which he has saved the world. But probably the apostle may not design to proceed further at this stage of his argument, than to direct attention towards the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, which can justly be considered as the way in which he speaks to man. The prophets spake by admonitions, by recalling to the recollection of the people, the long catalogue of mercies, of deliverances, and of judgments past, by positive predictions—of like future dealings, and by the assured announcement of a Saviour foreordained. Christ speaks by testimonies from heaven, flowing from the excellent glory. Moreover, the apostle declares this speaking to be the last.

The sign of the Son of man coming in the clouds with power, will indeed dazzle the eyes of many, at the closing scene of this earth, which, with the heavens, is to pass away, and the terrors of elements dissolved, will questionless bear conviction to the most obdurate heart. But neither in the glorious coming of the Son of man, nor in that bright company which will surround him as he descends, will be heard, or if heard again, it will be heard too late, the admonitory call which now effectually speaketh; I say effectually, for surely now when the latter rain has been abundantly shed over a favored soil, men will rarely be found with hearts

so incurably barren, as not to profit by such bounty. Is the blood of the covenant wherewith ye are sanctified, deemed by you an unholy thing, or the spirit of grace, of estimate so lowly in your eyes, that ye do it wilful despite,—would to heaven, that each individual who now hears me, received the phrase of the apostle as specially addressed to himself, and asked of his conscience the searching question: "How have I entertained the communication which God has been graciously pleased to make me by his Son." It is to that Son, that we must ascribe whatever clear views we may have of God's attributes, his power, his holiness, his mercy, his truth and long-suffering. Human reason was far from competent to conduct to these conclusions. Further, through that Son, the scheme of redemption has been revealed, and other mysteries developed, to which reason was not merely incompetent, but inapplicable.—If then, value be attached to such vast benefits; if men delight in the knowledge of him, whom to know, is life eternal—if they love to comprehend thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, let them give ear unto the voice which speaketh by the Son.

The call is not to knowledge only, but to practice. Even faith, ranking as it does, high among the brightest of the Christian qualities, even such faith as could remove mountains, holds in the eye of the apostle a station subordinate to, at least, one necessary attainment. If I have not charity, saith

St. Paul, I am nothing. In like manner, doth the same voice which invites to glory, invite us to virtue also, and to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. The voice bids us rise from the death of sin, unto the life of righteousness, buried in baptism, with Christ into his death, to rise in newness of life, and the expostulation consequent upon this hypothesis, should never be absent from the mind, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." It is to this purport the Saviour speaks, the prophets exhorted man to believe in a Saviour to come, Christ invites him to follow a Saviour gone—gone to the bosom of the Father from whence he came; but gone to receive into everlasting habitations those that love him. And since, as we are taught, none but the pure can enter into these blessed mansions, within what awful limits does this declaration circumscribe mankind; how fearfully doth it narrow and confine the way,—yet such are the words of that holy One, who is himself, the way, and the truth, and the life. In no terms of inferior strictness is his call to happiness conveyed. Thus, then, he speaketh, and God the Father speaketh, and the Holy Ghost, the sanctifier, speaketh; all speak through him, who died that we might live, and all the prophets, and all the apostles, and all the noble army of martyrs, speak through one and the same Spirit. And now the apostle himself

draws together into one associate band, this mighty fellowship, full armed to fight against sin, the world, and the devil, and true to the great Captain of their salvation. May it please that merciful Being who wouldest not the death of a sinner, to preserve and defend his own, amidst the dangers of such a combat. Among the standards of many brethren the glorious banner of the cross unfurls its lofty device. God give all men grace to look towards it, and boldly to war under it. And may he who now speaks to us through his Son, ever condescend to address us by the same voice, yea, and that a mighty voice.

The world is filled with its sound, but its trumpet tone shall shake the skies. It now vibrates in the narrow compass of time—time will be no more, and its free course will traverse eternity. Oh! may we hear, and heed, and love, and obey its heavenly dictates. That so when all these things shall be dissolved, we may be found perfect in godliness, joint-heirs with the blessed Saviour, who now speaks, and worthy of adoption into the heavenly family, through the merits of him, who being made perfect by sufferings, shall bring many sons with him into glory.

SERMON II.

HEBREWS, ii. 9.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man."

THIS declaration of the apostle is worthy to be had in great honor. It distinctly applies the prophecies of David in his eighth Psalm to the person of Messiah, and sheds a clear light on whatsoever may appear obscure or perplexing in the tracery of the royal pen. "Thou hast put all things under him," saith the expectant psalmist, piercing the mists of futurity with the eye of faith, and anticipating, as in some happy vision, that glorious period when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ; doubtless the faith of the apostle was not a whit behind the psalmist's, and indeed his own words elsewhere denote a

kindred confidence; but in the present instance he demonstrates that the prediction was as yet unfulfilled.

David writes like one who possesses himself of future events, as already past. Paul, no less convinced, expounds the import of Scripture still to receive its accomplishment and sustains the assurance of the believer, till the final manifestation shall have been completed. Thus, David speaking in the spirit of prophecy, saith of Christ "thou hast put all things under his feet." But saith St. Paul, "we see not yet all things put under him," for Paul well knew that Christ must reign for a long period before all his enemies should be subdued unto him. He discerned the power of sin, striving to maintain dominion over our mortal bodies, and render them obedient to carnal lusts. He saw Satan waging a fierce, a protracted, and a various warfare against the Saviour, and the last enemy, death, gathering in many a full harvest ere he was destroyed. These things the apostle well knew, and therefore, he does not glory in the actual achievement of the psalmist's expectation; but directs in unwavering persuasion to the approaching period when all shall be fulfilled. He proceeds yet further, for he demonstrates the way through which the promised fulfilment should come; and while on the one hand he saith, "we see not yet all things put under him,"—on the other, he draws this fine

distinction—"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory, and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Let us consider, in what sense we may understand the apostle's declaration—"We see Jesus!" To see the Lord's Christ, to catch a glimpse of the ineffable perfections of the Saviour, may be ranked amongst the highest privileges to which human hope can aspire—we cannot in our dark estate, and with blinded sight, see him as he is. Another, and that a higher condition of being must be attained to, ere that blessed consummation come to pass; for now we see through a glass darkly; yet even now, we may love the light we cannot altogether comprehend, and look on the author, as the future revealed finisher of our faith. May God of his infinite mercy, vouchsafe us hearts to adore, and holy diligence to search, into the mysterious essence of our ever-blessed Redeemer; and may the Holy Ghost, the sanctifier, cleanse our spirits, souls and bodies, so that they shall be meet receptacles of these amazing mysteries. Now, in the humble desire of deducing from the text of this discourse, somewhat tending to edification, I purpose, through God's grace to inquire—First—in what manner Jesus was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death. Secondly—how he tasted death

for every man. And thirdly—the quality of the glory and honor he now enjoys. How was Jesus made a *little* lower than the angels? It might at first sight appear that the apostle designed to institute a comparison of degrees in this case; that, for instance, the Saviour is said to have been made a *little*, but not a great deal lower than the angels. Nor should we be entirely without warrant for such a conclusion—for a gradation of order is distinctly shown to exist among the celestial intelligences. Jesus himself said of John the Baptist: "The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." And the apostle enumerates archangels, angels, principalities and powers,—we might thence descend a step lower, and infer a minor rank, as denoting Christ's power and dignity thus lowered; still we do not find it easy to understand the phrase a "*little* lower than the angels." If he treat of Christ in his human nature, the phrase would surely be inapplicable; as man, taking our nature upon him, though "without sin," we must consider Christ to be much lower than the angels, who have never sinned; and to those who kept not their first estate, no allusion or parallel is made. In truth, it may be doubted whether, as far as it relates to the mind of Christ, it differed from that of angels; unless, perhaps, we may consider them as not now exposed to temptation.

Yet this distinction will probably be denied,—

and not without reason. We know not of any change that has been made in the nature or faculties of angels, since their first creation; but we do know that they have sinned, and thence infer that they were tempted, for to sin without being subject to temptation, is inconceivable. Now, if we imagine all angels to have been tempted, and that some as we know were subdued, and fell, we discover Christ as lower than none, and superior to many of these heavenly inhabitants. And his superiority would be in this respect greater; in so much, as that the burthen of the flesh which he bore, interposed obstacles to the triumph of the spirit. His agony in the garden bears testimony to this opinion—for we cannot doubt that some feeling dependant upon human, shall we say mortal suffering, caused the travail of his soul. Again, angels, we are taught, enjoyed a sensible manifestation of the Godhead; a privilege, doubtless, of great efficacy in strengthening their obedience and confidence. With Christ it was not so; though truly upheld in his arduous way, by non-liability to sin, or by the power of his divinity; and consequently freed from the actual commission of sin, he was yet not destitute of the impulses, and even the painful emotions incident to the flesh. Nay, it would seem that the light of the divine countenance was withdrawn, and that the dark clouds of humanity rolled their sable volumes between the man Christ Jesus and his heavenly Father. Christ, at that dread

hour, when the cup he had prayed might pass from him was given him to drink to the very dregs, felt himself removed, as it were, from the source and fountain of his strength, an outcast of heaven and earth, and gave utterance to his anguish in these plaintive terms—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

If then under trials such as these, the spirit of Christ still stood firm; if no persecution, nor reviling, nor ingratitude could weaken his love to man, but rather, if prayer answered execration, and blessing responded to curse, and love offered peace and reconciliation to the tormentors, we shall see Jesus displaying a character superior to angels rather than lower. How then did he become lower? We answer, by his assumption of man's flesh: I have not said sinful flesh, for of sinful flesh, I am persuaded our Saviour had none—but man's flesh with its infirmities he took, and underwent, in that flesh, the penalties of torture and death. In these respects he was lower than the angels, who are exempt from both. Perhaps, likewise, the mode of his converse with mankind may have placed him lower than the angels, for they are employed as ministers of the heavenly will—executing the decrees of Him who sends them, and invested with the exercise of his power. Christ is represented as a wanderer without where to lay his head, subject to human laws, and controlled by human authority; and these di-

vers humiliations did clearly constitute him lower than the angels; and the insult and the mockery to which he was exposed, and his final death, wherein pain, and ingratitude, and contumely, strove for an unholy preeminence, serve to complete the picture. But though all this be true, it does not seem that St. Paul had such points chiefly in his view; nor yet had David, from whom he quotes. The marginal translation of the passage of the 7th verse, in our common Bibles, throws much light upon the question. We find there the words which in the text stand simply "a *little*," rendered "a *little while*," and very properly so, for the original manifestly implies duration rather than degree. It imports the period, and not the fact or amount of our Saviour's humiliation. That Christ spent but "a little while" on earth in his manhood, is recorded in the truth of Scripture; a few brief years passed between his infancy and crucifixion, and might well be termed a "little while;" and it being admitted that his assumed nature constituted him lower than the angels, the remainder becomes quite intelligible.

To such effect spake our blessed Lord himself: "a little while" I am with you, and again, a "little while" "I am not with you, and because I go to the Father." Now, these are expressions in strict accordance with the phraseology of the text, and elucidatory of it. A "little while" indeed, and no

longer, the true light shone on this earthly scene, but its rays shot far and wide. The distant Gentile beheld and wondered,—on them who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, beams of surpassing brilliancy, poured a glowing current of vivid day. In the radiancy were all things made manifest; the perishing falsehoods of heathen idolatry—the truth of the everlasting Gospel. Let no man aver, that he sees it not; let no man declare, that its fine gold is become dim. Holy Scripture has stamped upon it the character of universality—it lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

But the regions of that life and immortality were only to be entered through the gloomy gates of death. The way lay through insult, cruelty, and pain. Christ trod it, and encountered all the obstacles. His strength was oppressed by the burthen of the cross—his feet were wounded by the rugged rocks which composed the path. These obstacles might have caused a spirit less firm to waver, or wearied a constancy less persevering, or effaced a love less deeply graven. We know, however, that Christ surmounted them all. The ardor of his love could not be chilled by the cold blast of a world's ingratitude; nor the brightness of the crown after which he aspired, lose aught of its lustre by the tainting breath of the sinners for whom he died. The ruins of creation, lay before him; but prophecy had pronounced that he should restore all things. God sent him for this

end—love impelled, grace sustained. The robe of divine majesty was for a while laid aside, and the only begotten Son, the Eternal, before all worlds, cast away for a season the vesture of immortality, and condescended to array himself in the apparel of the grave! Thus, truly, did he become for a "little while" lower than the angels—thus, in the fulness of the apostolic assertion, did the Saviour submit to this degradation, "for the suffering of death."

Now, in pursuance of the division laid down, we next inquire into the circumstances, how Christ tasted death for every man. That he should have tasted death by any means, cannot fail to affect us with extreme surprise. The coeternal with the Father, is recorded to have lain in the grave, and became obedient unto death. Were it not that we have learned to distinguish between the human and divine nature of Christ, which we do not, however, herein divide, we should experience great difficulty in the fact before us. A suspension of the being, or operation, of one of the persons of the blessed Trinity, is repugnant to every mind, and must be rejected without hesitation. Christ cannot, therefore, in such sense be conceived as in anywise tasting death. But as man, he tasted it; and happily even in our mortal nature, the soul may survive the destruction of the body, or the spirit live in its immaterial condition, when the tabernacle it dwelt in

is no more. But though suffering in human nature, the power of our Saviour's divinity was manifested in the grave; for there, victory was achieved by the Son of God, over him to whom the son of man had yielded obedience. Death is described in Scripture as an enemy, as the last enemy that shall finally be destroyed. Sin was the first enemy, brought forth by lust, and in its own finished work producing death. Our Saviour came, that he might destroy the works of sin, and therefore it was necessary that he should triumph over death, his chief master-piece. To win this conquest, he entered the gloomy palace of the king of terrors, and wrested the sceptre from his reluctant hand. When we consider how difficult it is to form a just conception of death, even as regards ourselves, it may easily be admitted, that its operation upon our Saviour's body cannot be more comprehensible. No doubt we discern a distinct cessation of the powers of life, as certain faculties, or properties, are commonly styled,—the heart no longer throbs—the breast no longer heaves—the eyes are dim—the flesh is cold; but how this privation of sense and motion is effected, puzzles our inquiry;—still more, the state and condition of that invisible quality we term animal life, or the rational soul, or the eternal spirit. These inquiries perplex us. Applied to the Saviour they confound our reason—suffering in human nature, yet in nature likewise God—dying

for man, whom he had made, and redeeming a world he created—immortal, yet submitting to death—ruler over all, yet bound as a captive—the king of Glory seeing the king of terrors face to face. . . . . Herein was accomplished the object stated in the text, and Christ is proved to have been made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, which he tasted. This appears the design and mode in which it was executed; and though we know, and are sure, that the time will come, when death shall have no more dominion over our mortal bodies, and that the source which supports his poisonous waters will be altogether dried up—his kingdom totally destroyed, and his power abolished and extinct; yet, all this is still a great mystery, even when shewn by the apostle.

This state, whatsoever it be, our Saviour consented to undergo. His faithful keeping of his promise, reached the land where all things are forgotten; his loving kindness was descried in the midst of destruction. Moreover, the cup of which he drank, was tasted for every man, for "he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 15.) The Lamb of God was slain, to take away the sins of the world; and through this taking away, likewise, in the fulness of time, to abolish death; for by sin death had passed on all men; for that all men have sinned. Hence,

as all men had served sin, and earned their reward, which is death; so the scheme of ransom which God devised, included all men. We argue not now the question whether all men became participant in the glory which our Saviour procured for himself, by his obedience unto death upon the cross; I mean in so far as is inferred from this passage; but we consider in what sense Jesus tasted death for all men. It cannot mean that he died as all men do, in consequence of the fall of our first parents, and thus yielded to the law of our common nature; but he died, or, as the apostle hath it, "he tasted death," for all men. He tasted as he did of the hyssop upon the cross, but he did not drink of the long oblivious draught. The power of his resurrection raised him again from the grave, and offers the guarantee that all men shall rise with their bodies. We may further reflect that the death of the natural body leadeth to destruction both of body and animal life, while the death of the believer with Christ, and being one with Christ, accomplishes the redemption of both. But Christ died for all men, and offered a sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction—full, perfect, and sufficient—for the sins of the whole world. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," are the words which fell from his own blessed lips. True, but the number of those to whom he refers, is restricted by the comparison drawn in the passage, "as Moses lifted up the ser-

pent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up." Now, as only they who looked upon that serpent were healed, so to believers only who look unto Jesus, belongs the phrase in the text—he tasted death for every man. The oblation, indeed, was made for the sins of the whole world, but received, or shall we say laid hold on, only by the believing portion of it, by the church of the dispersion, redeemed out of every kindred, tribe, and nation. And this will further appear from an observation of the phrase in connection with the words last cited. It is said that his tasting death for every man, was a result or consequence flowing from the grace of God, that is, that the grace of God sent him to taste death.

Now, whilst it is doubtless the grace of God, which freely giveth us all things, it is nowhere declared that it giveth to all men that eternal life bestowed on believers in the death and atonement of Jesus Christ. We are, indeed, assured, that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; it has appeared as a gift, and a monitor, teaching them that "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." And thus it is, that salvation is offered to them that believe, for believers only will live soberly, righteously, and godly; hence the apostle, "By grace ye are saved through faith." Then this grace is only effectual to

believers, and the tasting death here spoken of, goes no further, as this declaration beareth witness, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that *believe* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." These are the "sons of the first resurrection," on whom the "second death hath no power;" these are they who have tasted death with Christ, and with him, their chief shepherd, are brought into glory. But was Christ, in his divine nature, a gainer by the glory to which he arrived? Assuredly not! He asked for no higher glory than he had enjoyed before he left the bosom of the Father. Then the honor of Christ as Son of God, was not advanced by it, nor did the deserts of man claim it. To what shall we resolve the mystery? To the glory of God! But who will presume to set up a throne for him who is above the heavens, or dictate what shall magnify his glory, who is over all the earth? Shall man, the creature, weak in judgment, and with dimmed sight, constitute himself an arbitrator to decide how the inscrutable Creator may be profited by the creatures he himself has made? Although this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, still is this knowledge not acquired by a vain weighing of ourselves, ever deceitful in the balance, or an overweening estimate of our own value in the eyes of God. God, we are taught, resisteth the

proud, and giveth grace unto the humble—nor does this grace flow from the eternal councils as in recompense for the love of man. Holy writ declares a very different truth; its sacred pages inform us, that the carnal mind is at enmity with God, and that mankind were aliens and strangers from heavenly converse; but God desired not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. Sin would have closed the fountains of mercy, but love unbarred them; and the waters of grace, flowing over the green pastures of hope, fertilized the smiling soil, till at length the earth opened, and budded forth the Saviour! In this was love manifested, not that we first loved God, but that he loved us. Loved us with a love so pure and bright, that not all the defilement of our sins could abate its lustre, nor the pestilent breath of our ingratitude extinguish its flame. Of that love, who can duly speak, though he had the tongue of men and angels! No man, doubtless, can conceive it, whose heart has not been convinced of sin. But who is convinced of sin, unless he who knoweth God's law? Then it follows, that to love God, we must know God. But no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son hath revealed him—and to whom else doth the Son reveal the Father, but to him who loveth him? Then, is all this a circle of argument? Not so—it only proves that love is the forerunner of know-

ledge, and knowledge the expositor of love, and in the love which a believer bears towards God, we behold a fair manifestation of the effects of free grace. Freely have we received it; it is the gift of God: the gift is of eternal life, and that life is in his Son: in him was life—but that life was only quickened for us, by his death; but now hath he quickened us, who were "dead in trespasses and sins." Thus far reached the grace through which he tasted death, and bid us rise again in newness of life. In vain do we strive to draw near, and behold this wondrous mystery. Faith doth, indeed, enable us to make some advances towards the truth, and fervent prayer meets its reward, in many, and gracious glimpses of the holy One; but the secret of his invisible being lies far beyond its reach. God dwelleth in a light no man can approach to: his ways are not as our ways—his thoughts are not as our thoughts—his judgments are far above, out of our sight. Happily, that which the heart of man could not have conceived, passed through the councils of the eternal mind, and a lost world was saved.—And now follows that miracle of celestial recompense, spoken of in the text: Christ is seen crowned with glory and honor. You will have perceived that in the desire of perspicuity, I have inverted the order of the passage as it stands in the text; whereas, the verse runs thus: "Crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God,

should taste death for every man," as though glory and honor preceded the death—we rather esteem the death to be the antecedent—glory and honor, the consequent; or as if included in a parenthesis—God did indeed glorify Christ while upon earth, as was intimated by the answering voice from heaven; but that voice likewise announced a glory yet to come. Now, as the believers of whom the apostle speaks, could not then see Jesus in his first glory, that is, his earthly, it follows that allusion must here be made to his heavenly. And yet, perhaps, we may deem the purple robe, the crown of thorns, and the cross, as so many incidents of glory, and exclaim with St. Paul, "God forbid, that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

But, however, this interpretation would militate as well against the arguments already adduced, as be contrary to the prevalent impressions of our Lord's disciples, none of whom, considered the cross in any other light, than as a scandal, and as an ignominious termination to the life and career of their Master. To the Jews, also, it was a stumbling-block, they could not away with. Even St. Paul himself says to the Philippians, ii. 7, 8, "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even

the death of the cross." He died as victim, and as priest of the sacrifice. He tasted death, but did not make a full end thereof; and St. Peter taxes his brethren, the Jews, with having killed the Lord of Glory, who had voluntarily laid aside his high dignity, and assumed the nature of man, much lower than that of angels, and saved by his death, the seed of Abraham. For the children of the faithful, for the whole family of believers, the gates of heaven are opened. And because Christ hath done this by his humiliation—in his humiliation his judgment was taken away—that is, the condemnatory sentence through which he was put to death, was erased, in so far as that he should not be holden of it, and the election of his human nature to the honours of his divine achieved. "Therefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world, of whom the world was not worthy, because it knew him not: but a remnant knew him, and that he came forth from God, and these beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—for these had been born of God, born not of blood, nor of the will of

the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Now, the apostle, in the text asserts of such persons, that they see Jesus. We may ask of ourselves this serious question: do we see Jesus? We cannot discern him by the dim glass of human reason; seeing that these very matters were counted foolishness by the philosophic Greeks; but the apostle shows how we may discern him, and that is in his human nature, primarily, when the veil of his flesh rendered the lustre of his divinity tolerable to mortal eyes. Christ, the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—Christ going about doing good; today, triumphant and accompanied by applauding hosts, tomorrow, a captive and forsaken by the disciples his soul loved—this day raising the dead, the next numbered amongst them. These earthly sights must first be gazed on, ere we shall be fitted to behold his exalted glory. For as without God, speaking in times past, by the prophets, men could not fully comprehend the mystery of an incarnate Saviour; so now, likewise, unless they duly consider the mystery of his incarnation, they will fail in arriving at the sublimities of his exalted state. Hence, it is fitting that we should see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels in that humiliation wherein, for our sakes, he condescended to abide. Under these circumstances it was, that he left us an example that we should follow his steps, an example which we shall not deem barren or unprofitable, when we remember

that on our likemindedness with him depends, according to the apostle, our seeing him as he is. I know that this promise is limited to the time when our chief Shepherd shall appear, and let us unfeignedly confess our total incapacity to attain, even in thought, to such participation in the divine nature. Yet, it is not forbidden to approach the portals of the city, we are for the present debarred admission into; nor while now in the valley of sin and death, to lift up our hands unto the hills, from whence cometh our help,—"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, and tasted death, that he might deliver them from the fear of death, who were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

See him, as the martyr and apostle saw him, crowned with glory and honor, and sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and be ye yourselves amongst the gems that sparkle in his crown of rejoicing. See him, as he was when on his blood-stained brow a crown of thorns displayed its insulting pageant, and the poisoned shafts of malice, and of mockery, fell thick upon him; when perjury wove the tissue of his accusation, and murder tolled forth his knell. See him, as he is—every drop of the blood then shed, glittering in brilliant glory, like stars that shine in the firmament for ever and

ever. See him so; and remember the words he spake, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." See—the dead thorns that pierced his brow, have taken root in the soil of a Saviour's love, and flourish an everlasting chaplet of fadeless beauty. The shouts of death, that urged on the reluctant Pilate to pronounce a sentence upon the innocent man, lost in the gratulations of applauding angels, poured forth in the immediate presence of the Father. Oh! see him so, and say, "what manner of men should we be in all holy conversation and godliness." Oh! see him so, and say, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Moses, and all the prophets foretold his coming. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saw his day afar off, and rejoiced. Christ himself, by his miracles, his death, his resurrection and ascension, vindicated the truth of the inspired predictions concerning his mission, and his apostles attested their convictions in their blood. All these men saw with the eye of faith, Jesus crowned with glory and honor; and shall our darkened faculties fail to see him too? No, my Christian friends, he who giveth wisdom unto the simple and sight unto the blind, and discloseth unto babes the marvels of his power and Godhead—he will hearken unto the voice of our supplications, and pour the light of his countenance upon us. So shall we see him, whom sin hath pierced; once lower than the angels, now

adored by every bended knee. Glory and might are round about him, power and honor are in his sanctuary. The world is his temple, and filled with his glory, as of old the fabric which Solomon had reared, with the sensible glory of the eternal Father. And the glory of his heavenly mansions, stand revealed before the eyes of faithful men, and the temporary obscuration of his Godhead serves but to display in more vivid comparison its ineffable effulgence, and the words of the Saviour shed a clear and steady ray over the language of the apostle, for Christ hath spoken it—"I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."

SERMON III.

HEBREWS, ii. 17.

"Wherefore, in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God."

THOUGH the wisdom which understandeth all mysteries, may be denied to our present imperfect state of being, no prohibition restrains us from a reverential inquiry after the most obscure intimations of divine truths. To search what the spirit of Christ that is in us doth signify, is doubtless a profitable labour, and worthy as well of our faculties, as of our piety. A blessing is pronounced upon the sober seeking of the devout mind, whose aspirings towards knowledge are regulated by the hope held out in Scripture. Thus, though neither reason nor faith can successfully investigate the secret things that belong unto God, yet our endeavours to com-

prehend his eternal councils, are encouraged and sustained by many gracious promises and aids.

We must remember that finite faculties, and exercised by finite creatures, are of necessity incompetent to the discovery of infinite objects, and that therefore we can at best obtain a partial and indistinct view of them. But we must not despise a benefit because we acquire it in a limited measure, nor shrink from the imperfect performance of a duty we cannot altogether fulfil.

We know that the period is at hand, when the believer who persevereth unto the end, shall receive the recompense of great reward; for he shall see the Saviour as he is, when the dimness of the days of his vexation shall melt away, and not even a passing vapour of this mortal life intercept the rays of the sun of righteousness. There is indeed a condition of vast moment annexed to this promise—no other than to see the Saviour as he is, we must be like unto him, a likeness which we conclude to consist (if, indeed, we can form any just conception concerning it) in a very advanced and exalted grade of spiritual existence. Whether this happy consummation be attainable in our mortal life, or that the soul must be delivered from the burden of the flesh, ere it enter into such joy and felicity, we do not now discuss. To be likeminded with Christ, and to imitate him, who left us an example, that we should follow his steps, are precepts, which the

written word of God has pronounced without any reservation. These are commandments, which if a man observe and keep, he shall even live in them; they form the groundwork of a blessed eternity, and are the very source and fountain of present peace. Now, I offer these observations, not on account of their novelty, for they are universally familiar, nor as ascribing to them a value beyond that awarded them by common consent, but under the conviction that they belong justly and naturally to the question before us. For if we admit the extreme difficulty of showing how we become like unto Christ, here, or hereafter, will not the same obstacles beset our path, when we undertake to show how Christ became like unto us? Yet such is the declaration of the text; and as we marvel, if rather we do not stagger at the promise, that man, in his exalted nature, shall sit in glory at the right hand of God; so may we also survey with wonder the Son of God, abasing himself so low as to be found in fashion as a man. Man, in whose very name, weakness, trouble, and sin appear united—the fleeting purpose, the inconstant mind, the wayward will, the changeful spirit, the murmuring tongue, the stubborn heart and evil eye—surely these qualities cannot have been assumed by him who came to be one of, but yet to save the seed of Abraham. Heaven would refuse entrance to a guest so polluted, and he, in whose sight the

heavens are not clean, would turn away the light of his countenance from a spectacle so unholy. Yet "this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down at the right hand of God." So speaks the unerring word of truth—and as it is certain that Christ offered this sacrifice in his human nature, it necessarily follows, that the reward was earned while in that nature. Hence we have to seek a similitude from which sin must be excluded; for sinfulness could not possibly earn glory and life immortal as its wages. But the text says, "It behoved him *in all things* to be made like unto his brethren." Is our sinful nature then comprised in this declaration, or not? If it be, how could Christ offer a pure sacrifice?—if it be not, what avails the language of the apostle? May we, God's grace assisting, rightly discern the Lord's body, as well in this world of suffering, as when exalted to the realms of glory, and even through the vail of his flesh see Jesus, a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, making reconciliation for the sins of the people. The first inference to be drawn from the words of the text, is the manhood of Christ—the mystery of "God manifest in the flesh,"—"Forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. ii. 14.)

Now, this passage bears distinctly upon the subject before us, for it marks the object of our Saviour's priesthood. Now, the object was this: by a sacrifice, the sacrifice of himself, to rescue man from death, the consequence of sin, and so to reconcile him to God by the abolition of sin. In the second article of our church we profess to believe, that "The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance." It is scarcely necessary to observe, that this declaration, plain, indeed, to those who rightly believe the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, derives ample support from many distinct and clear passages of holy writ. But however satisfactory the evidence may appear, merely of its general truth, and however certain it be that the coming of our blessed Lord in the flesh, is a fact, surely believed among us; yet the nature of that flesh which he took, and his own participation, or rather the mode of that participation, in what may be termed the accidents of humanity, have engaged deep and earnest attention in all ages since the Christian dispensation commenced. It is not unimportant when we consider, that the sacrifice for sin was made in human flesh, for such was the offering upon the cross, and this sacrifice was accepted. Therefore, we may

profitably inquire into two questions, or branches of the subject, viz. in what way the end of sacrifice was accomplished, and how the ancient types were fulfilled? We profess then, that "The eternal Son of the eternal Father took our very nature upon him in the womb of the blessed Virgin, and of her substance, and incorporated it by adoption with himself, entirely, perfectly, and inseparably." (Art. 2.) Now, it certainly appears that this nature derived from the substance of the Virgin, must of necessity have belonged to the nature of man, for in her we know of none other. He was the son, by generation, of Abraham and of David; in all things made like unto his brethren, *sin only excepted*—made, however, a sin offering, and that, because he knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

It is clear, upon the principle of sacrifice, that this which was constituted a sin offering must of necessity be itself sinless. For as we cannot imagine that one guilty person could atone, by the substitution of himself, for the sins of another guilty person, seeing that both would be obnoxious to punishment; so neither is it admissible, that the abstract quality of sin should reside in the victim, by the sacrifice of which it is designed to take it away.

And in strict unison with this reasoning were the sacrifices in the Levitical dispensation. We learn therein that the high priest entered into the holy of

holies once a year, not without blood, to make atonement for his own sins, and for those of the congregation. He entered in, in his character of high priest, and as mediator of the congregation, to the place where alone sacrifices were accepted; and he, therefore, offered sacrifice for himself, because he was a sinner. He offered sacrifice of blood, because without blood there is no remission, but not of his own blood, for the same reason that required his offering sacrifice at all, namely, because he was a sinner. His blood being tainted with sin could never be received in atonement of it, or make the comers thereunto perfect.

Of the beasts whose blood was offered within the vail, we may observe, that while we know nothing of the nature of any impress made upon their minds, acquainting them with the distinctions between right and wrong, or, indeed, of any moral qualities: we yet learn from Scripture that their evil propensities, and more especially their antipathies, are derivable from the fall of man. Sin invaded the peaceful retreats of paradise, and bore dissension and violence among the multitudinous tribes of the inferior animal creation. The blood, therefore, of these sacrifices was tainted by sin, and could not in itself atone, but it was offered as a type of the one only sufficient oblation and satisfaction. Now, because Christ knew no sin, nor had in his human nature, in so far as pertaineth to the

actual commission of sin, suffered from the consequences of the fall, he, therefore, needed no sacrifice for himself; and for the same reason, that is, because he knew no sin, was he, in human nature, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. But let us state the argument thus:—Our Saviour has been received as a sacrifice for sin, and it therefore follows, as St. Paul in this same Epistle saith, that "this man," who "offered one sacrifice for sin;" this "Christ Jesus," did not partake of man's sinful nature.

Nor are the infirmities of humanity offences against God's laws. No question, the infant Jesus took in the womb of the Virgin of the substance of man, and being such, became subject to the affections of the human mind, as love, joy, sorrow, (I do not see clearly that he experienced any other,) as also to the infirmities of the body, as hunger, thirst, weariness, suffering, and death. In all these things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. And yet, of the last of these only can it with strictness be predicated, that it is a consequence of the fall of man. "By sin came death"—all the affections of the mind already named, as well as the infirmities of the body, seem common to other created beings, and such as are exempt from the lot of humanity. For example, angels who have never sinned, are yet represented as loving, rejoicing, sorrowing; nor are we destitute of at least

probable grounds, to support our inferences concerning the remaining points in question; I mean those connected with bodily infirmities, or, at least, kindred wants. In the 18th chapter of Genesis it is announced, that three embodied angels appeared unto Abraham, "as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day, and he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." Indeed, the author of this epistle enforces his admonition to hospitality, by the assurance that in practising this virtue some men have entertained angels unawares. (Heb. xiii. 2.) What is true of hunger, is at least probable of other bodily infirmities, and may, I conceive, be fairly deduced from the premises. Now, it will not surely be alleged, that in the instances brought forward any connexion exists with the fall of man; so neither may we esteem it of our Saviour, the analogy being correct. But still the Scriptures say, that he was made in the likeness of man. True, he was made in the likeness; but we must beware of confounding likeness with identity, or even with a minute exactness of similitude. Moses predicted that the Lord God would raise up a prophet from among the children of Israel like unto himself; but who does not discern the many discrepancies between Moses and the

Saviour? though none may deny their many resemblances.

But, indeed, the word likeness is of such general acceptation, that it is scarcely necessary to be thus scrupulous in our application of it in the present instance. St. Paul tells the Romans, (vi. 5,) "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;" but this is doubtless a figurative expression, for surely we cannot say, that we have died as Christ, or expect a resurrection similar to that by which he raised himself through his own power. In glory, indeed, and arrayed as saints in light believers will arise, and the promises of Scripture hold forth this high reward, and so shall be thus partially fulfilled the resemblance. Then, since we are not warranted in asserting that we have died as Christ, in strict acceptation, neither may we assume that he has partaken of our sinful nature. As affecting his fitness to offer, in his own person, an atoning sacrifice, it appears to my apprehension that a sinful nature would invalidate its efficacy as completely as the commission of actual transgression; if, indeed, there be a real distinction between them. But our Saviour, with whom God was well pleased, did certainly never commit sin, nor was guile found in his mouth. That he was exposed to temptation cannot be denied—that he resisted the tempter in all his shapes and enticements is equally

certain; but shall we affirm that he was not liable to fall? Upon this inquiry we may bestow a few words:—The devil does not seem to have been entirely free from hopes of succeeding in his efforts to shake the Saviour's constancy, and though foiled had still advanced to the attack with much confidence. Hence it would appear, that he discovered, or imagined, in Christ's human nature the possibility of his success; nor do the subsequent accounts given of the Saviour's trials and agony in the garden, tend to exempt him from apparent liability to sin, "in all things tempted as we are." In the incident last referred to, we find a touching proof of the effect which his own approaching sufferings produced upon the mind of our Redeemer. He first prays, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me;" but a deeper sense of duty prevailed over the sorrows of his afflicted soul, and supported by his own precept, "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," he exclaims, with a willing spirit, "thy will be done." Was he then sustained by the power of his divinity, or did the strengthening of angels overcome the assaults of the evil one? "There is no man," saith the Scripture, "that doeth good and sinneth not," but Christ was a man, yet "went about doing good," and certainly did no sin, for saith David, "and thou continuest holy, O thou worship of Israel."

Then the likeness will appear to have consisted

in exterior resemblance, and in what we have termed the accidents of humanity; in the form and fashion of man, and in his wants, feelings, and sinless infirmities. But, saith St. Paul, (1 Cor. xv. 39,) "all flesh is not the same flesh." And again, verse 49, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." The image of the earthy or natural man, is here compared with that of the heavenly—who is styled, the Lord from heaven. The image of the earthy must, therefore, be distinct from the image of the heavenly; and so Christ, in taking our nature and form upon him, renounced his own, or incorporated ours with it. But the apostle advances arguments beyond mere externals, in affirming "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and, as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Was Christ, then, earthy in such sense? By no means, for then, had he been a sinner, contrary to the express declarations of the Holy Scriptures—yet he was a man, and, being so, was touched with a feeling for our infirmities.

This far we do know, that if Christ in his human nature was prone to sin, or liable to yield to the power of temptation, the might of his divinity upheld him. Consequently he was wholly sanctified, and the whole body of sin in him utterly abolished. And not, as in the chief of the apostles, did the war of the flesh and the Spirit rage with

dubious issue in the person or mind of the Saviour. In his lips was found no guile, and in his blameless way no traces of the tempter displayed their defilement; the whole mind and all the affections were constrained to do the will of him that sent him; and he, the only begotten Son, yielded his spirit, soul, and body, in furtherance of the heavenly work; and left, to a wondering world, the amazing mystery of the "just offered for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

But it is objected that our Saviour having become subject to death, evinced, in his own person, one of the consequences of sin, and was, therefore, a sinner. That death came by sin is quite true;—not so, however, that Christ's voluntarily laying down his life for the sins of mankind would prove him a sinner.

This voluntary act was the fulfilling of the law of sacrifice, and has the weight of proof on the other side, for it was required that the victim slain should be a pure one. Perhaps we cannot entirely determine what effect injuries inflicted upon the bodily organs of our first parents before the fall, might have produced upon animal life—and to demonstrate unanswerably the triumph of the great destroyer, death should rather have ensued from decay, disease, or age. But Christ's death was not so effected—though the Saviour was indeed by "wicked hands crucified and slain;" though men pierced his hands and feet; still let us remember that the offering was his

own proper act, "I lay down my life," and again, "no man taketh it from me." (John x. 17, 18.)

I conclude, then, that further is not designed in Scripture, by the announcement that Christ took our nature upon him, than that, in assuming it, he adopted the external guise of humanity, together with its sinless accidents. How far this adoption may have rendered him liable to fall into sin, I leave to those who delight in disquisitions of this character, convinced less of their substantial usefulness, than regretting their tendency to engender strife. The fitness of Christ to offer, in his own person, an atoning sacrifice, is demonstrated in the word of life, and his pure example manifest to all men;—and these are the two cardinal points becoming us to entertain in our minds, as sufficient acquaintance with him whom to know is life eternal.

I depart from this portion of my subject, fully sensible that many will pronounce upon the insufficiency of the proofs adduced; and indeed, scarcely inclined, even if competent, to push illustration or argument much further. If any decisive Christian doctrine, not independently revealed, hung upon the inquiry; if any important and soluble difficulty demanded explanation; if any apparent contradiction offended the consciences, or changed the practice of men, the labour of investigation and inquiry would be well bestowed. Not seeing it in this point of view, I refrain from further discussion.

But question as we may the transient victory of the grave, we are quite sure that Christ, the first-fruits of the resurrection, triumphed over its power. The man Christ Jesus could not be holden of it, that death should have dominion over him; nor He, the apostle and high priest of our profession, remain frustrate of his office. No, brethren, the written word assures us that the one sacrifice for sin, hath been offered and accepted—offered once only, and that he who was priest and victim reposed from his labours, and hath, for ever, sat down at the right hand of God. The Saviour, like the Creator of the world, rested from all that he had done. A dark night of confusion and sorrow ushered in a day of brightness, of calm repose and joy. Degrading as was the humiliation and painful the toil and death, yet was the eternal reward ineffably high, holy, and glorious. From the labours of earth he passed to the repose of heaven, from warfare with sin, the adversary, to the peace of God. He has passed the waves of this troublesome world, and now sits on the blessed shores of everlasting happiness.

So, too, the followers of Jesus; they shall rest from their labours, and as they recline upon the rock of ages, shall cast the placid gaze far over life's uncertain sea, grateful to that guiding providence which upheld their reeling bark, safe amid the rushing waters, and the angry storm.

But who procured for man, miserable dust and ashes, these precious privileges, and raised him thus to sit in heavenly places? Who, but he who was in all things made like unto him, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people?

And this brings us to the second and final portion of the text containing the reason assigned by the apostle, why the Saviour assumed human nature. The object in view was to reconcile guilty man to his offended Creator; and this through a merciful and faithful priesthood offering sacrifice in a kindred nature. In comparing the sacrifices of the ancient covenant with that of Christ, we discover this striking distinction, that whereas the former were but substitutions, that is to say, an inferior animal, as a bullock or goat, was offered in the stead of a man, and suffered the penalty of death due to man's transgression—the latter, on the contrary, was man for man: Christ become man—suffered for his brethren—and this is not a substitution of another in the sense above intended; but, as it were, a condensation, the iniquities of all the race of Adam being laid upon his shoulder, and borne by him upon the cross. The sins of the whole world were brought together in the person of this delegated victim, and washed away in his blood, and God accepted this one person as repre-

senting all; and, since all must have died, for all had sinned, this one died. And this was the sacrifice. But this sacrifice, as already demonstrated, was, of necessity pure, else had it been but the sacrifice of one for himself, if not rather the punishment—and not the sacrifice of one for all. And further, in preparing himself for this mediation between God and man, it behoved him to become acquainted with our nature, its weaknesses, temptations and griefs; and so he could more effectually plead for mercy towards his brethren. Moreover, he could feel mercy with all the tender sympathy of one who was himself in the flesh.

And yet, how feeble the claim which man can lay to the mercy attributed by the apostle, in the text, to the priestly sacrifice and intercession of the Saviour. We dare not penetrate the recesses of the infinite mind, or measure its vast depths, by our line and plummet; but, reasoning as mere men, we should draw the conclusion, that any other feeling towards man, than that of mercy, would predominate in the divine breast.

For, in the retrospect of that period he spent on earth, what would present itself but an unbroken tissue of disobedience, persecution, ingratitude, and death. But little do they know of the surpassing love of Christ, who form such an estimate of his pure and spotless spirit. That same voice which pleaded on the cross in behalf of sinners,

and rose sweetly above the scoffs and taunts a wicked crowd poured forth, advocates our cause as a silent victim, in heaven. That same bright and beaming face, whose splendor pierced the darkness that brooded over the devoted land of promise, now shines on high as the stars, for ever and ever. And why this glory? Why, but for his obedience unto death upon the cross, through which also he brought many faithful souls to righteousness.

Nor could Christ have failed to be a merciful high priest, towards that seed of Abraham, of which he had himself become one. Though, indeed, mankind had been generally perverse and hard-hearted, unwilling to receive the doctrines of the cross, or furiously persecuting their divine author; yet, neither was his sojourn upon earth devoid of all testimony of ready belief, and disinterested affection, which might plead for merciful recollection in the bosom of his love. The Son of man had not where to lay his head; yet some faithful disciples were found, who forsook their all and followed him. His miracles may, ofttimes, have tended as much to harden as convince; and we know that his enemies, who refused to yield to the plainest demonstrations, imputed the exhibitions of supernatural power, which ought to have manifested forth his glory, to the criminal agency of Satan. Still, if many gainsayed, many also believed; if many walked no more with him,

some did constantly abide; if many disdained to cast their lot with his, yet, too, did many choose that good part which shall never be taken away. And say, my Christian friends, do we presume too far, in humbly hoping that even, in the breast of the exalted Saviour, a remnant of pure personal affection may harbour unextinguished? The mother who watched over and guarded his infancy, and guided the course of his early years—the memory of her care may not have all expired—her tender faithfulness clung around him through every change of good and ill; and even, at the last dreadful hour, when friends and disciples and apostles shrank from the appalling perils of the scene—when, save one, the nearest and dearest of his fellow-labourers forsook him and fled, the pale but undaunted figure of a woman was seen to approach the speargirt cross, and the mother, who had passed into Egypt to preserve the life of her son, scorned, at this season of sorrow and dismay, to consult for the safety of her own.

We may perhaps dare to hope, that in the eternal breast, for a while mysteriously associated with the creatures of this world, the affections of humanity can yet glow, and some recollections of those ties, we mortals deem so dear, bind him to the whole family of man, to present them to his Father, with these happy words, "Behold my mother, and my brethren."

Yet, brethren, we must confess that our notions of these worldly regards are far, very far from equalling, much less surpassing, the infinite love of Christ. When he descended from the regions of immortality to take our nature upon him and dwelt among us; when he suffered and died to redeem us from sin, and those penalties attached to it, from which the law of Moses, nor any human efforts or device, could never have set us free; surely we have no room to question the continuance of his care, or fear that he who was the voluntary sacrifice, will cease to remain the merciful high priest. No, it cannot so be. The transactions of the past are guarantees for the present and the future, and men, believers, brethren of the blessed Saviour, may repose secure in his attributes of mercy, as applied to his heavenly intercession.

But Christ is likewise described as a faithful high priest, faithful to his promises and his people, whom he will confirm unto the end; for faithful is he that calleth them. Our blessed Lord is faithful, in that he hath promised nothing to his saints that he is unable to perform. The wayworn pilgrim and stranger upon the earth, leaning upon Christ, as his staff, as he toils along the rugged road that leadeth unto life, is never deceived. He finds him a support to his weariness—to his dangers and his combats, a shield and buckler. The penitent mourning under the burden of many offences, sees

in Christ, one who has declared that he will wipe away all tears from all eyes, and all men know that they have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. Moreover, he is an advocate in the sense noticed by the apostle, in things pertaining to God. He is the faithful high priest making intercession for the sins of the people, whose wants and desires he truly represents before the throne, and is mindful of his covenant, for as it is not given to man, to look on God and live, and that no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son hath revealed him, and as this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent, does it not follow that we approach God, only through the Saviour, and hence we shall admit the value of the office he undertakes, and the inexpressible blessing attendant on his faithful discharge of it.

And what is the object of the office? Hear the words of the apostle: "To make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Here is indeed the whole end and purport of Christianity revealed; man reconciled with God; his sins blotted out by the offering of his faithful high priest, and he himself received into favor, and become the object of heavenly grace, mercy and love. And to achieve this, Christ took our nature upon him, and was in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted, and became a merciful and

faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God. Faithful, in that he died for sin—faithful, in that he rose again from the dead—faithful, in that he ascended into heaven, and faithful, in that he now offers the blood of his sacrifice within the vail, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Who can meditate upon these awful mysteries, and not feel his soul humbled to the dust in the contemplation of his own utter vileness.

Reason shrinks from the inquiry into the nature of a God incarnate, and faith, fainting amid the difficulties of her trial, seeks support from that grace by which the world is saved.

And man, is it for thee, for thy sake, to bring thee nearer unto God, and wean thy heart from evil, that all these wonders are accomplished? Dear brethren, oh! that the Spirit of God would seal us with the knowledge and love of his own divine essence!

Oh! that the wisdom from above, would guide us to the knowledge of ourselves, the noble, the glorious purpose for which we have been created, and the precious promises which the Father of all has graciously vouchsafed to make. How happy the conviction—at least to every believer, who needs must interest himself in eternal things, to feel and surely know, that in heaven's high courts dwells one, who once was flesh and tabernacled

on earth, and now exalted, but still in the same nature intercedes for his brethren, and pleads the sinner's cause. A merciful high priest, mindful of our infirmity and of his own covenant—a faithful high priest, who keepeth his promise for ever ; and a sacrificing high priest, who maketh reconciliation for the sins of the people. Of all this the text assures us. This the apostle unfolds as a roll wherein is written the charter of our salvation; and displays the map of our eternal inheritance. He who had seen the Saviour in his glory, would fain raise our thoughts with him continually to dwell. For he, the Lord, is king, and well may we exclaim, "the earth may be glad thereof—yea, the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof—clouds and darkness, may indeed be around him, and veil the splendor of his presence from the feeble sight of men, but righteousness and judgment, also, are the habitation of his throne. Mercy, faithfulness, and love, are found where his honour dwelleth, and thither may man aspire. To these high realms of joy, the mind is directed to upraise itself—To that region of inconceivable happiness we shall see God, and see him, no longer shrouded by the mists which hang around our mortal view, and forbid our gaze to penetrate the gloom encompassing the eternal world ; but see him as he is—surrounded by that great company of angels which no man can number, and worshipped

by unwearied saints in light, and just men made perfect for ever and ever.—Shall see Christ—the mediator of the new covenant—the sacrifice of himself then completed, and the kingdom delivered up to the Father—its great object being accomplished—to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

SERMON IV.

HEBREWS, iii. 1.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

THE words of the text are manifestly addressed to believers, as members of that holy family in earth and heaven, named after its federal head, Christ. For the apostles of Christ bestow the appellation of holy brethren upon Christian professors, merely as being in visible communion with his church. Their title to it rests upon still higher grounds; even on the spiritual fellowship into which Christ has been graciously pleased to admit the sanctified. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one; wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Heb. ii. 11.)

And these are likewise styled holy brethren, as

well from their relationship to their Lord, as from mutual fellowship with each other. One common object was in view—one common faith was held—one common hope inspired—and one common love cemented the entire body; and this love joins together the several parts of the Christian edifice, uniting by its sacred bond, the foundation of apostle and prophet with Jesus Christ, the chief corner-stone.

Yet we do not aver, that this love, thus happily blending the Christian brotherhood of every nation, doth, of itself, sanctify or make holy, those who experience its power over their hearts. The apostle, John, has well demonstrated the quality and character of Christian love, in that while he saith—"Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." (1 John v. 1.) He adds the test by which we receive assurance that our love is genuine. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." And again, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John v. 5.) "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John v. 20.)

From these passages we may attain to the meaning of the apostle, in that before us. His words are manifestly addressed to no body of worldly men, halting between two opinions, or more boldly preferring time and its pleasures, to eternity. He speaks to the persuaded believers, who, by faith, have overcome the world. And his commandments are not grievous; to the visible company of that great multitude who have "washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb;" to them he speaks, and invites them to consider the apostle and high priest of their profession, Christ Jesus.

And, truly, brethren, we know not on what topic, more profitably to direct our consideration, than on that recommended by the apostle. It is difficult to conceive a labor more grateful to the mind. But St. Paul seems to guard the invitation by a phrase which, whether we consider it as expletive of the term holy brethren, or as limiting the condition on which the apostle of our profession may be considered, deserves some attention.

The holy brethren are represented as partakers of the heavenly calling. Now, these holy brethren were either the whole body of Hebrew believers, separated from the whole body of the called; or else they were the whole body of the called, comprising within them the separated believers. If all who were called be esteemed worthy of the term "believers," then must the apostle address the

Hebrews, without reference to individual faith, or perhaps even to church unity. But, if they were the "elect of God," the "called to be saints," the "faithful brethren in Christ," whom he invokes, it would follow that his admonitions must be received in a stricter acceptation and to a privileged class.

But in Scripture the term holy appears in very general and, indeed, indefinite application, as holy brethren, holy vessels, holy oil, holy city, and so forth, and not necessarily implying a people select or chosen of God, but merely such as his will has been made known to, by visible and appointed means. Of the class of the elect, or chosen of God, are the Hebrews to whom this Epistle had been sent. They were called to a knowledge of the Gospel, through the instrumentality of the ministers and preaching of the word, and were sanctified in the truth in the same manner as other converts.

And these Hebrews are styled in the text, not merely holy brethren, but "partakers of the heavenly calling," and this seems to be the privilege possessed in an eminent degree, by the so styled holy brethren. He refers to it in his Epistle to the Philippians, declaring that he "counts all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 8.) Impelled by a holy zeal to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, he "follows after, and presses towards the mark for the prize of his high

calling in Christ Jesus." Then this heavenly calling is of God, who called the world from the rising up of the sun unto the going down thereof, and of Christ, who made the world, and calleth to every man, every where, to repent. It is a call from heaven of God to sinful man—it is a call to heaven to justified man by Christ, who himself led the way —it is the voice of the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus, speaking and expostulating with the spirit that is in man.

Moreover, it is likewise a heavenly calling, in that it summons man from the darkness of the valley of sin and death, to the marvellous light of the everlasting Gospel.

Now, in whatsoever aspect we may be disposed to view this call as abstractedly considered—whether as a call to the Gentiles to leave off their worshipping of idols of wood and stone, and to turn unto the living God—or to the Jews, to repent and believe the Gospel; whether it be a call to the blessings and privileges of the last dispensation, or a call to eternal happiness; one thing at least is clear, that it is not partaken of by all men.

The physician may come with healing on his wings. The messenger may appear, bearing in his hands the means of grace and the hope of glory. The spirit of love, bring down heaven into the hearts of men, and faith and hope descending from on high, exalt him to sit in heavenly places; yet

are not all these blessings by all, or every where received. The table is spread, but it is unfurnished with guests. The waters are troubled, but men stand idly gazing beside the brink. The manna has fallen around every man's tent, but the careless and the scorner refuse and disdain to gather it. And thus is it with the world; blessings countless as that "small round thing," fall unseen, unheard, before our doors. Even in the stillness of man's lethargic sleep, the watchful mercy of a loving God sends a gracious dew upon his inheritance. Christ bids the slumberer awake, and displays to his opening eyes the heavenly food freely offered; and if he suffer the season to pass by unimproved, the sun of righteousness, as did the orb of day on the manna in the wilderness, pours its ardent rays upon the perishing gifts and graces, and destroys them by the brightness of his shining.

Herein we see somewhat of the nature of the heavenly call, and how it ought to be observed. It inculcates practical precepts which it behoves every renovated mind to cherish and pursue. But, between being the apparent object of the heavenly call, and a partaker of it in that high spiritual sense in which the apostle speaks, there exists a wide difference, insomuch as the offer of a benefit is distinct from the receiving of it. . . . St. Paul himself is an eminent example of the heavenly calling, nor was he disobedient to the vision. . .

A few days of bodily blindness bore testimony to the insupportable effulgence of the revelation vouchsafed him, days which we may conclude were not spent in vain, but occupied either in reviewing his past life, or as preparation for his future career of usefulness; for thus far we do know, that so soon as the scales were removed, which for a brief season covered his eyes, he set himself steadfastly to consider the apostle and high priest of his profession, Christ Jesus.

And so he recommends to the Hebrews, in the text. And so, doubtless, it behoves all Christian men to aim at, in his double character there set forth, as apostle and high priest. First let us consider him as an apostle, in which capacity he was sent by the Father upon the gracious errand of bringing salvation to fallen man. Heralds had preceded him, and messengers, to prepare in the desert, a highway for our God. Signs, and mighty wonders, and types, all tended to announce and foreshow the coming of the Saviour; and, in the fulness of time he did come, an apostle, not of men, but of God, bearing indeed the message to all men, but effectual only to those named in the text as partakers of the heavenly calling.

When we consider Christ as an apostle, we are necessarily led to reflect upon the person who sent him, and to this the Scriptures bear constant testimony. He appears as a steward of the mysteries

of God, and continually referring to him as the fountain and origin of his mission. It was doubtless from the bosom of the Father, whence sprang the counsels that saved the world. Christ was the appointed means through which salvation was achieved, and the apostle who promulgated the good tidings of life and immortality to sinful man. His sacrifice of himself, is the atonement full, perfect, and sufficient for the sins of the whole world; but it is in the love of God that we are to search for the primal spring of every blessing—from him only flows the river which makes glad his people. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And again—"when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Christ, then, is an apostle, entrusted of God with the revealing of his intentions to sinful man. For, saith the Scripture, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matt. 27.)

Again, Christ, as an apostle, came to deliver a message from heaven, in the strength of God. The message so committed to him was the an-

nouncement of God's love. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true." (1 John, v. 20.) Moreover, this apostle came in the flesh—the spirit of life came in the "likeness of sinful flesh." (Rom. viii. 3.)

We must, however, observe throughout, that our Saviour is spoken of as an instrument—as one fulfilling not his own but his Father's will—"All things," saith St. Paul, in his epistle to the church at Corinth, "are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. v. 18.) . . "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." . . . "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Thus, even in the declaration of his own authority and mission, and in announcing the end to be accomplished, St. Paul professes himself to be merely a subordinate apostle—a substitute for the ascended Jesus, and supplicating sinful man to be reconciled to an offended God; not merely in the name, and through the mediation, but in the stead, that is, *he* stands in the stead of the Lord Christ. . . The delegated apostles of Christ possessed the gifts of the Spirit, in divers measures; to some was given the gift of prophecy—to others of tongues—to others the interpretation of tongues.

To Christ alone, "our apostle," belonged the Spirit without measure. St. Paul enjoins us to

consider him." Let us, then, do so in the character of "Head over all things to his church." The church would be but a lifeless body—a mutilated trunk without Christ, its head, to govern and direct it, to rule and guide the members. Nor can we dissever Christ himself, after his incarnation, from this mystical union; or imagine him as existing otherwise than united with his church. In fact, we are taught that, when the blessed consummation of all things shall arrive, and that there shall no longer remain a church, on earth, militant against the powers of darkness, Christ will surrender the kingdom his righteous obedience has won, into the hands of his Father, and in God be supreme over the church triumphant.

But, while the conflict continues, the array must have its head, from which it cannot be separated, which head is Christ. In like manner we are incapable of conceiving Christ without his church, in the period antecedent to the consummation of all things, for then had his office been either fulfilled or abrogated. Still Christ, though now head, is an apostle, and as such acts. Having received gifts for men, he dispenses them freely, without money, and without price: he infuses the spirit of love into our hearts, through which we keep the commandments of God; and the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, abba, father. From the self-same spirit

all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed.

Thus the judgment of Christ, as head, regulates the members. The members, on their part, minister homage to the head. The entire body fitly joined together, constitutes the great family of earth and heaven, the beloved of him who is over all from the beginning.

These things bear witness to his heavenly mission, and testify to his undoubted apostleship. And though an ascended Saviour may not now be made visible to our mortal eyes, faith sees that he who sitteth at the right hand of God, is the same with him that descended even to the lower parts of the earth, and is now exalted far above all heavens. Though dead, he liveth; though absent, he yet speaketh; though received up into glory, he yet comforteth the weary pilgrim in the dark valley; though reposing in eternal rest, he bids the heavy-laden cast their burdens upon him, and he will refresh them. This is the apostle whom St. Paul enjoins us to consider. But who may hope to embrace the many aspects, in which the Lord of life and glory reveals himself to our contemplation? The clouds of heaven burst asunder and rain down the Saviour. Earth opens and buds him forth. The heart of every believing man acknowledges him as an inmate and a guest; and his Spirit witnessing

with our spirit, claims kindred with his holiness, for it testifieth that we also are the sons of God.

We are further urged by St. Paul to consider our relationship to the Saviour in a new light; namely, as the high priest of our profession. To arrive at a distinct conception of the allusion made by the apostle, it is requisite that we revert to the character and office of the Levitical priesthood.

But before the institution of that religious body, and indeed from the earliest epochs of the world, the notion of sacrifice and atonement did plainly exist. We discover amongst the primal impressions of the human mind, an idea of substitution. That is, of placing one party in the stead of another, to bear the punishment due to a crime committed; to propitiate the favor, or avert the wrath of an offended God. These substitutions did indeed partake largely of the quality of a bribe by which vengeance was appeased, for the discerning perceived easily that, though anger might be softened, or infliction mitigated, no satisfaction was offered to justice. No erasure of the stain of sin; the guilty man, though pardoned, was guilty still. The debt might be forgiven, but it was not paid. I do not assert that this was so with all sacrifices or offerings; for it is well known that many among them had a different scope and intention; but I deem it incontrovertible that in those to which the design of propitiation can be ascribed, such was the

real complexion. The sacrifices of the believing patriarchs, before the law, belonged to a class superior to those already touched on. They were offered either under the injunctions of immediate revelation, of which the record has been preserved, or derived their origin from some unwritten precept, or from the influence of the Divine Spirit, secretly exerted, or from inferences whose source has been withheld from our knowledge. But, spring from what fountain they might, no doubt can exist that they were meant to pourtray the enormity of sin, and the punishment that should follow. Whereinsoever men may have esteemed them of typical import, the conviction of sinfulness became necessarily more powerful and distinct. In pursuing this subject we find that, so soon as God had separated to himself a peculiar people, and withdrawn them as well from the tyranny, as the pernicious example of idolatrous oppressors, he instituted a church, with rites, ceremonies, ordinances and sacrifices. In this sanctuary was preserved the knowledge of the truth; pure worship was practised, and false and fabled adoration discountenanced and condemned. To guard its treasures—to maintain order—to provide for the due celebration of its offices—and to discharge all its peculiar duties—ministers were, in consequence, selected; set apart and sanctified. Of these, the chief, the earthly head over the whole church, was the high priest.

An object, from person and dignity, of solemn respect to the whole congregation; his station, his knowledge, his mediatorial character, the august privilege which he enjoyed, of entering into the holy of holies, and the consequent communication with him who resided therein, invested him with a sacred and mysterious reverence.

Even the very period at which it was enacted, that his office should begin and end, increased rather than diminished the influence and respect attaching to his high dignity. The season of life at which the high priest was chosen, and the time when he ceased from his office, embraced that portion of human existence least liable to exception. Passion may have been supposed abated, judgment matured, and zeal and energy in full exercise, hence the high priest possessed every advantage essential to command general consideration.

While the host was still in the wilderness, he was the guardian of the sacred things, and keeper of the oracles of God. He also intimated and interpreted the Divine will to the people.

As well before as after the Israelites had reached the land of promise, the high priest offered sacrifices of atonement and mediation for the sins of the people and his own. Now, while St. Paul speaking by the Spirit of God, expressly says that these sacrifices, which were offered year by year continually, could never make the comers thereto perfect in

things pertaining to conscience ; still, so long as the Jewish church preserved its integrity, so long did an altar glow with incense and an offering. But it was decreed, in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, that all these things should be dissolved. Types and shadows ceased to prefigure him who, in fulness of time, came. The gorgeous apparel of the high priest waxed old as doth a garment, and all the temple services, waning and dim, shed a lustre no more, over the worship of a present Jehovah. Yet the glory of the second temple surpassed that of the first ; for Christ, the incarnate Saviour, vouchsafed to utter the words of truth and holiness beneath its dome. Not that we allege that he assumed the character of high priest there, but rather preached as an apostle.

He is *now*, and from the period of his sacrifice upon the cross, our high priest ; and, as such, it seems the object of the author of this epistle, to present him for our instruction ; not merely in the passage selected for the text, but throughout the whole letter.

In fact, it is manifest that the principal design of St. Paul, in writing this epistle, and indeed the main tenor of all the arguments contained in it, goes to establish this doctrine.

Christ is now our high priest ; but where does he hold his abode, seeing that the fabric wherein, of old, worship was wont to be made, no longer exists. Holy Scripture unveils this mystery, in proclaiming

that the high priest of our profession has passed into the heavens, there to "appear in the presence of God, for us." (Heb. ix. 24.) These earthly tabernacles, which were patterns of the true, have ceased to receive the high priest, entering into the holy of holies with the blood of bulls and of goats. But our high priest, who has boldness to enter into the holiest with his own blood; him, the heavens must receive till the restitution of all things."

The apostle would direct our attention to this region of peace and glory; he advises to the consideration of Christ, primarily, as an apostle, in his incarnate state, when, having left the Father, he descended upon earth, to fulfil his mission of love. He invites us to look upon him now in his ascended state—ascended up into the eternal heavens, offering the atoning sacrifice of his bleeding body, for the sins of the whole family of man.

No period is assigned to his ministrations—no limit contracts the sphere, or abridges the duration of his office; "He continueth for ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood." (Heb. vii. 24.) And again, "He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises," (Heb. viii. 6,) where sins and iniquities will be remembered no more, for "he hath obtained eternal redemption for us," (Heb. ix. 12,) having "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," (verse 26,) "being offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for

him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." (ix. 28.)

Thus may we consider our high priest, in all his holiness, "consecrating for us a new and living way through the vail, that is to say, his flesh." (Heb. x. 20.) "And, having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (x. 22.)

This is the moral of the whole. To such an issue all the previous argument is directed; for the consideration of the high priest of our profession cannot be profitably pursued, if unaccompanied with a sincere desire to attain to a corresponding purity of conduct. What import, in fact, can we assign to the phrase "of our profession," unless that it suggests a call to remembrance and circumspection of life and doctrine?

A palpable absurdity is involved in the supposition that a profession, based upon the foundation of the unsinning Redeemer, will confer benefit upon its members on any conditions, distinct from personal holiness. "Be ye *followers* of me (saith the apostle) as dear children;" but further, he adds, "be *like-minded* with Christ." That the sacrifice of the Lamb slain should avail to the blotting out of transgression, it is required that a man be found faithful, a sincere believer of the word, a convinced parti-

cipant in its privileges and ordinances, and zealous to exalt the honor, and maintain the kingdom of Christ, the head. For our profession is to fight against sin, the world, and the devil; to bear the cross, that we may wear the crown. And well does the apostle, in the text, enjoin us to "consider" Christ, as our apostle and high priest. Had we not such a light to guide us, too often would our feet stumble in the dark valley. Had we not such a staff to support us, the wearied pilgrim fallen on the way, were long since a prey to the fowls of the air, or the ravening wolves of the forest.

But, blessed be God, we possess both the lanthorn for our feet, and the staff for our hands. Christ ministereth not at an inaccessible altar, nor bars the avenues to a sanctuary of which he is himself the door. If the way be dark and slippery, we know that it is passable; for Christ is the way, and through him all men come to the Father. If obscure clouds overhang our progress, and cast a gloom over unchangeable truth, yet need not man despond, for Christ, our high priest, is himself the truth, and will surely dispel the dimness of our vexation. If the fear of death, spiritual or temporal, appal us, be it ours to remember him who is our life. Thus are the difficulties of the path all removed, and the entrance through the narrow gate fully won. And, brethren, the invitation has gone forth. The innocency requisite in the be-

liever, ere he may hope to avail himself of the Saviour's sacrifice, is distinctly announced in the written word. Precept and assurances unite their authority to encourage him. Both one and the other tend to remove that depressing sense of imperfection, which would dissuade from all approach, and abate the vain-gloriousness that divests the endeavour of its essential concomitant—profound humiliation.

Partakers of the heavenly calling—ye whom the still small voice, wherein the glorious God that maketh the thunder, loves to dwell—ye faithful brethren, on whose hearts that still small voice has not fallen in vain—ye, the elect of God, draw near your high priest. Be not dismayed, because ye but darkly discern his person, his offices, or his glory; the time is promised, and will not tarry when ye shall see him, and all his adorable perfections, face to face.

Nor yet tremble at the consequences of your lack of knowledge; but rather remember the apostle's expectation, that we shall know, even as we are known, when we shall be like unto him, for we shall see him as he is.

Further, St. Paul gives the reason why we should consider the high priest of our profession, in truth, a very valid one, to those who feel the insupportable oppression of sin—namely, that "he is able to succour them that are tempted." They

who are thought worthy of the future world will accept of this freely proffered grace. Such characters must esteem it a privilege of high price to be called to consider him as their chief priest, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily.

The same precious privilege is bestowed on us. We, too, may consider him in his incarnate state, when, tabernacling upon this guilty earth, he humbled himself even unto the death of the cross, for us, miserable sinners.

We may consider him in his exalted state, effulgent in the glory which he enjoyed before all worlds.

We are also led to view him in a more intimate, and pleasing, because a more conceivable relationship, the kindred affinity of our own nature. Therein is God manifest to mortal sense, and appreciable by mortal faculties. The pure, the lofty, the glorified Messiah, reigning till his enemies become his footstool, and sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, may indeed confound our reason in the incomprehensibility of his essence, or dazzle our intellects by his glory.

But the lowly Jesus, the meek Emmanuel, the gentle spirit of the holy One and the true, descends within the sphere of our perceptions, and abides in the humble habitation of the human heart. Him we can conceive, if partakers of the heavenly

calling; and him the apostle invites us to consider. And, brethren, he is not far from every one of you; nay, he stands at the door and knocks. From him cometh every good and perfect gift—the faith which is the substance of things hoped for—the hope which is as an anchor to the soul—the love that shall endure for ever.

Over the despondencies of the fainting mind, the word of life pours a heavenly comfort. The flower of the desert, to whose bloom the arid soil ministers no moisture, drooping beneath the fiery sun, turns towards the fountain it cannot reach, and pines, and withers, and expires.

So will unaided man mourn over the happiness beyond his grasp, and faint at the Lord's rebuke.

But far otherwise the budding of the tree the Lord hath planted; it springs beside the waters of grace and stretcheth forth its boughs towards the river that will not fail; for Christ unbars the fountain-source, and bids the life-giving current overflow every border. O'er every land the streams are seen to roll, the lowly valley of Jehosephat blossoms with its sweet smelling roses, and the streets of proud Capernaum confess the genial dew.

Who shall refuse what Christ thus freely offers? Who shall turn away from the water of that well which if a man taste of he shall never thirst again?

And this is Christ, the high priest of our profes-

sion—and this is Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

Oh, may he, who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful man, now direct and sanctify yours, to consider Christ your apostle and high priest. Fools may scoff, infidels disbelieve, careless men disregard, and reprobates reject; but, brethren, I beseech you, by the mercies of the living God, have not your portion with unbelievers. The voice of God calleth on you to consider—the love of Christ constraineth—the hopes of heaven, of life and immortality, are graven in the legend upon the cross. The Saviour of the world hangs upon it—the sacrifice is offered—the atonement is accepted. As you would be partakers of his glory, be followers of his humiliation—though all men should forsake him, yet do you never forsake him.

SERMON V.

HEBREWS, viii. 1.

"Now, of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

THE words here cited constitute the conclusion, or summing up, of the chapter immediately preceding, wherein is detailed the order and priesthood of Melchisedec.

That mysterious character is presented to our contemplation in such limited measure of announcement as it hath pleased the Holy Spirit to reveal him. Of his origin we are taught nothing; no more is declared concerning his parentage or ancestry. An intimation, vague and equivocal, fixes indistinctly the position and boundaries of his kingdom; and a dark cloud of indefinite language, which the learning and ingenuity of commentators

scarcely suffices to penetrate, obscures the commencement, and the period, of his life and ministry.

"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life."

Such are the terms adopted by St. Paul to convey some brief notices of this wonderful type of the Redeemer; for, that he was a type the apostle plainly asserts, when he says, "he was made like unto the Son of God, and abideth a priest continually."

The narrative, as recorded by Moses, shows more distinctly in what resemblances the typical character consisted. We shall, I think, do wisely in having recourse to it on the present occasion. An army conducted by four confederate kings had descended from the hill-country, and sweeping the fertile plains which lay along the river, plundered the city of Sodom. The marauders were met and routed by Abram, who, hastily collecting the men of his own household, flew to the rescue of his kinsman. For Lot was amongst the captives, and owed his liberty to the valour of the patriarch, while the guilty people, among whom he dwelt, confessed alike the same obligation.

As the victors bent their way homewards, the humbled king of Sodom met them. It is recorded of this monarch that he pressed on the acceptance of the father of the faithful, the plunder his bravery

had reconquered, and simply demanded the persons of his subjects. But all recompense was declined. "For Abram said unto the king of Sodom, I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even unto a shoe latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich; save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eschol, and Mamre; let them take their portion." (Gen. xiv. 23.) In company with the king of Sodom was another potentate, the subject of our present inquiry, by name Melchisedec; and as that name imports "a king of righteousness," it possesses a title to our most solemn and earnest consideration. This king of righteousness was king of Salem, whether of that Salem wherein, as the psalmist informs us, Jehovah fixed his tabernacle, the prophet does not certify, nor probably is it very material that we should know.

We learn that he was not only a king, but a priest of the most high God. For, though the temples of idol adoration lifted up their heads around him, and the offerings to false divinities smoked upon many altars, yet still, even in the midst of this prevailing corruption, the only true God had a sanctuary and a name, at least in one heart.

Melchisedec appears, on the occasion adverted to, in the double capacity of king and priest; as king he welcomed and refreshed the fainting troops with bread and wine, the accustomed largess of royal bounty; as priest of the Most High he bestowed a blessing upon their deserving chief. Thus far the inspired word informs us as touching the life, character, and office of Melchisedec.

It is not surprising that learning, and ingenuity, and conjecture should be alike exercised in the endeavour to trace, with some degree of even plausible promise, the further progress of his ministry; but success is denied us, nor may we be wise beyond what is written; the rather as the object we might naturally have in view, is better effected by the notices and allusions which lie scattered throughout the Scriptures. For example—David, when extolling his Lord, and speaking in the spirit of God, proclaims him of Melchisedec's order, a priest continually, or for ever. And St. Paul declares to the same effect, in the language of the text—"We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Now, it would seem fit, in pursuing further the apostle's argument, to observe the following order; and God grant grace, and strength, to discharge this sacred duty with fidelity, diligence, and good result. First—to trace the resemblances existing between him, thus styled a priest before

the law was given from Mount Sinai, and the Saviour who fulfilled it; and, secondly—to draw some practical conclusions from the premises. . . A similarity of order is perhaps amongst the most obvious resemblances, though there may be likewise many other no less marvellous coincidences, as worthy the notice and contemplation of a Christian.

A common title and kingdom—their receiving gifts from faithful men—and bestowing blessings; these, surely, are subjects deserving of diligent research, and well-calculated to strengthen the eyes that, with unaverted vision, would gaze on that bright sun, foreshown by such a dawn.

First, we may trace the resemblances above referred to, as they manifest themselves in the genealogy of Melchisedec, and the Saviour. It is said of the former that he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." Were we to receive the first part of this intimation in its literal sense, we might perhaps be disposed to consider it as equally applicable, in many particulars, to the first man, Adam; or imagine that, like Adam, Melchisedec sprang immediately from the hand of the Creator, without the intervention of human parentage. This inference would, however, interrupt the general law, by an exception at variance with the whole tenor of Scripture, and be besides, in strict sense, contradictory to reason and experience. For how

can a created man be without beginning of days? or a mortal man without end of life? Perhaps no more is meant than that Moses has not recorded his genealogy; and this omission may have been made on good grounds, if it appear (a matter merely of conjecture or inference) that there was then no visible church upon earth; consequently Melchisedec could have had no predecessor in the ministry. He would have himself been set apart and anointed by the Holy Spirit to the office of the priesthood; and shone through the darkness of an ungodly age, a lonely, but a brilliant star moving in the vault of heaven, and conducting, through his typical character, the pious and the wise, to the place where the infant Jesus was, in fulness of time, to be born. But the question may fairly be put; does this explanation suffice to elucidate the phrase of the apostle—"without father, without mother, without descent?" I do not think that it does. If it be admitted as satisfactorily clearing up the obscurity which envelopes his entrance upon the sacred duties, I cannot dissemble my conviction that it leaves us in the dark respecting his worldly parentage; but this may be of slight moment, or, as before observed, studiously concealed; though for what reason we know not. This, however, we do know, that it is asserted in the inspired volume; and, therefore, of unquestionable truth. Moreover, it is through the clouds of this mystery that

we discern the resemblance borne to our high priest. Who shall declare his generation? Begotten before all worlds, and so, God, without a mother. Born in the world; and so man, without a father. God from everlasting, he has no beginning of days; eternal in his Godhead, he has no end of life.

Now these facts and peculiarities, whether we term them attributes or properties belonging to the Saviour, are clearly connected with his double nature, as God and man, and, therefore, cannot be partaken of by Melchisedec. Of their appropriateness to the only begotten of the Father, who took our nature upon him, we can entertain no question. Not so, as they attach to Melchisedec. No voice of antecedent prophecy foretold his appearance; nor did cotemporary or subsequent explanation supply the void; he stands alone and unsupported, a monument of God's dealings with the age in which he lived; but a monument whose inscription was illegible at the period of its erection. A door for the Gentiles to enter the kingdom of heaven; but the door remained closed till our Saviour brought down the key. . . . Our task is easier as to the remaining epithets. As Melchisedec flourished during a period prior to the promulgation of the Levitical law, he was necessarily exempt from the rigour of its enactments.

Among these enactments we find, that the ser-

vice of the priests was not required, or admitted, before the age of thirty years, complete; and, that it terminated with the fiftieth. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families by the house of their fathers, from thirty years old, and upwards, even unto fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation; this shall be the service of the sons of Kohath, in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things." (Num. iv. 1, 2, 3.)

Since, then, it appears that the priesthood of Melchisedec cannot have been limited by Levitical enactments, either as to its commencement or termination; and, since the periods of the holy office are in Scripture often styled days, perhaps it is sufficiently, however briefly shown, that the words, "without beginning of days, or end of life," are applicable to him in a literal and plain sense. Need it be asserted that they alike apply to him who abideth our high priest continually—born before all worlds—God from everlasting to everlasting—the same yesterday, today, and for ever? And so of his death.—Of the death of Melchisedec we know nothing; the Scriptures are totally silent; of our high priest we believe, and are sure, that he died and rose again from the dead, after the power of an endless life. Our attention is next drawn to

the name of Melchisedec; it indicates his kingly office, and peculiar quality. "First, being, (as saith the apostle,) by interpretation, a king of righteousness; and, after that, also king of Salem, which is king of peace." (Heb. vii. 2.) The first of these appellations seems designed to denote the personal quality of the individual on whom it was conferred. We are furnished with no other testimony; for holy Scripture is again silent, and imparts no information upon the life and conduct of this monarch. There may, however, be adduced internal evidence to prove that the title of king of righteousness was not an unmeaning sound, or idly borne. It is, at least, improbable that any priest, unconscious of innocence, would have ventured voluntarily upon the office assumed by Melchisedec; and have presumed to bestow an unhallowed blessing upon the father of the faithful. Nor can we reasonably conclude that Abram himself was in ignorance of his character; or, indeed, that he would have accepted of a benediction flowing from any impure source. Hence we may, as I conceive, infer that Melchisedec had established a reputation for sanctity, in the country where he resided, sufficiently stable and notorious to command the reverence of the patriarch, and justify the eulogy of the apostle. Besides his title of king of righteousness, he enjoyed another, that of king of peace—of Salem, as it is termed in the original language;

but, of a Salem, whose locality, or even existence, is only conjectural. Some suppose that Jerusalem is intimated; a supposition which will not be deemed irrational, when the phrase of the psalmist is taken into the account. "In Jewry is God known; at Salem is his tabernacle." These two words, being united, compose the name Jerusalem, of which Salem would seem to form a part; or might, perhaps, be considered an abbreviation. In such sense may Melchisedec have been styled king of Salem, or of peace; perhaps, indeed, his title bears reference to some previous mediation between contending states, or even to the blessing he so happily pronounced upon the tranquillity procured by the valour and conduct of Abram. Of this we are assured, that our high priest, Messiah, is king of righteousness, and prince of peace, in the fullest sense of these terms; no cloud or mystery obscures his title written upon his cross, and reflected from the clear vault of heaven, and proclaimed by angels to the world, when a risen Saviour assured the sinner's justification before God; no vail falls to shroud the peace a dying Redeemer had bequeathed. Holy, just, and good, in righteousness shall he judge his people; may we strive to render ourselves conformable to his image; to love that which he loves, and abhor that which he abhors; may he dwell richly in our hearts, by faith, until the old man be crucified, and the whole

body of sin utterly abolished; and taught by the Spirit of God, and running the way of his commandments, and renouncing every other master, with every rebellious desire subdued, and every high thought brought into captivity, and every proud bearing humbled; and wearied with the burthen, and disgusted by the foulness of sin, may we turn to the fountain for all uncleanness, the Lord our righteousness—the altar of our sanctification—our high priest for ever. To whom else shall we go, than to him who has the words of eternal life; or whither seek a refuge from the storm? What other balm shall sooth the unutterable sorrow, and misery, and confusion which sin has interwoven with man's transitory stay upon earth?

For, why should sin have dominion over us who are not under the law, but under grace; or reign in our mortal bodies, which wait for the adoption, to be clothed upon with the mantle of the glorified just? His servants we are, to whom we obey, and Christ is our only king. He who waves over a subject-world, the sceptre of righteousness, and rules in truth and equity. Guilty terrors may deprecate his wrath, and infidelity oppose or reject the extension of his peaceful reign; but practical believers will still be found, manifesting, in holy fruit, the inward germ that springs up in the secret heart, and praying for the hastening of the hea-

venly dominion. Let such men rejoice, for their names are written in heaven ;—let such men rejoice, for they are thus like-minded with the Saviour. On them will he who came to purify a people peculiar to himself, bestow such calm and holy tempers as will lead them from glory to glory, until they become meet companions of the saints in light.

Now, in the character of Melchisedec we discern many points of similitude with the qualities we have been considering ; let the narrative again declare some of them. Four leagued potentates had plundered the city wherein dwelt the kinsman of the patriarch ; and, smote by that patriarch's hand, the band crumbled into atoms, and Lot found himself unexpectedly rescued from captivity and shame. But it is not said that the arm of Abram prevailed in its single might. Scripture informs us that he marshalled three hundred and eighteen men born in his own house, and that this force composed the victorious host. On their return from battle and success, Melchisedec, priest of the most high God, came forth to meet and bless them. He bore in his hand bread and wine ; which, though as already observed, a royal largess, may also have been emblems of a holier festival. " And blessed (said he) be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand." We may say so of him who is our peace.

As the words of Melchisedec appear to have shed a holy calm over the troubled scene of the scarce stilled war, Christ bestows his peace to allay the angry passions of the raging heart.

Against the followers of the Saviour, as against the kinsman of the patriarch, an embattled world is arrayed—people imagine a vain thing, and heathen furiously rage together, and kings of the earth stand up, and rulers take counsel. How all these may be overthrown, the foregoing narrative teaches. Men must become regenerate, and born anew of water, and of the Holy Spirit. Men must be of the household of faith—of the seed of Abraham, the father of the faithful, before they can combat successfully with the enemies of Christ, or stand against sin, the world, and the devil; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith. And so also of the ransomed of the Lord; there is one who will triumph for them, if they have fought along with him—one who, if for a small moment he seemeth to forsake them, yet will gather them with great mercy; who hath said that they who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Like Lot, they may be for a season led captive by the power of the enemy; but, like Lot, the setting sun shall shed its declining beams upon their ransom. Above, and louder than the wailing of the prisoners, the voice of promise is heard to arise—"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye

shall have peace; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

And now, having briefly considered a few of the parallels existing between Melchisedec and our Redeemer, we reach that which is the most important of all; the similarity of their priesthood.

"We have such a high priest. He shall sit (saith Zachariah, vi. 13,) and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne."

It is true, that this prophecy was uttered at a period long subsequent to the time of the type of whom we treat; but the justness of its application to Melchisedec will appear from what has been already stated.

For he was also a king upon his throne, and a priest of the most high God; and, in the latter capacity, is represented as receiving tithes of all, and bestowing a blessing in the name of the most high God, whom he declares to be the possessor of heaven and earth. It need scarcely be noticed here, that Scripture supplies examples of sacrificing worshippers, at a much earlier period, as in the instances of Abel and Noah—sacrifices which, whether derived from revelation, or resulting from the ordinary course and progress of human reasoning, as some allege, seem to have been amongst the primary methods which men adopted to propitiate the favor, or avert the vengeance, of the true or of the imaginary God. We may likewise trace, to an

early date, in the great majority of nations, the existence of a peculiar order, solemnly devoted to the sacerdotal office; not that these were the only functions of the priests, more especially of those of the highest order, as was Melchisedec. Their duties and authority extended far beyond the mere exterior of sacrifice. They were, in fact, the mediators between the worshippers and the worshipped. They passed through the thick clouds which veiled the mysteries, none other might approach, under penalty of instant destruction; atoned for sins, none other durst hope to expiate, and dispensed the blessings which they alone were permitted to procure. These offices were common to the idolatrous priesthood of the pagan, and the ministers of Jehovah, though necessarily founded upon distinct assurances and convictions.

Melchisedec is the first priest made mention of in Scripture; and, as he is styled by the apostle, a "high priest," it is just to conclude that he appeared to Abram in such capacity. If so, perhaps we do not strain the import of the passage too far, in surmising that the offering of the patriarch may have preceded the blessing of the priest; nor is the conjecture inconsistent with piety, that he should have sought out this man of God, with whom, doubtless, he was acquainted, for the purpose of fulfilling this holy duty. Abram's own experience had taught him somewhat of the majesty of God;

he was, therefore, not altogether without a distinct conception of the terms through which the divine presence should be approached. Man, he might easily infer, required a mediator, to present his supplications at the footstool of the eternal throne; nor could the offended authority, or violated laws of the great Ruler of heaven and earth, be appeased unless on such conditions. For the sinner himself, though exposed to the penalty due to transgression, dared not even bring his offerings into the courts of propitiation, or hope for justification in his sight, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Hence arose the necessity for an intervening officer, which officer, foreshown of old, is now the high priest of our profession; and, as the text expresses it, "we have such a high priest." As touching the quality of the mediator, our first supposition would probably be, that he should partake of the nature of the worshipper and the worshipped. It is necessary that the worshippers and the mediator partake of a common nature, that there may be a mutual comprehension, one of the other. It is, upon the same principle, likewise necessary, that the mediator be as the object worshipped. With this view the high priest, in the Jewish ceremonial, purified himself from all legal pollution before he presumed to approach the holy presence of the Shekinah. Such was, and is, our great Mediator—God and man in two distinct natures, never to be divided—man for

our infirmities—God for our salvation. On earth he took our nature upon him, and offered sacrifice in the outer court of the tabernacle, where we also have been permitted to approach him, and to offer up ourselves, our souls and bodies, a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice. In heaven, the inmost sanctuary, his glorified humanity bears the sacrifice for us, which he himself offered; into that light which no man can approach to—to the holy of holies, the excellent glory, the holiest of all, the sensible presence of the eternal God.

Now, while we ascribe these qualities to our Saviour, in his character of mediator, does it follow that we have equal grounds for asserting as much of his type? I think that, upon examination of the type, the resemblance may not far fail us. That Melchisedec was a mere mortal, needs no demonstration. There is nothing contained in the holy Scriptures which might conduct to any other conclusion. Yet we may infer that, in the sense contemplated by St. Peter, he had, "through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue," become "partaker of the divine nature." (2 Pet. i. 3, 4.) Thus far, a fitting mediator of a worldly sanctuary, and worthy to minister in those things which are patterns of the true. And again, he brought forth bread and wine.

Now, while we can discern neither object nor circumstances, in the narrative, intimating a Eucha-

ristic sacrifice in this act, or an anticipation, otherwise than by typical symbol, of the offering of Christ, our passover sacrificed for us, we may note it as a peace-offering, according to the subsequent Levitical law, and we may also adopt the opinion that it was no inapt foreshowing of the body broken, and the blood shed, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If, then, there be any justness in the conjecture already hazarded, that Abram first offered his gifts, and that Melchisedec, in his capacity of high priest, pronounced a blessing upon the faithful worshipper, and bore in his hands the visible and typical emblems of the sacrifice yet to be revealed, we discover no indistinct pourtraying of our Lord's appearance, with the sacrifice of himself. Perhaps, also, the method of the installation of the high priest, may not have been altogether unknown to the patriarch, and that some glimmerings of such ceremony are discoverable here; but this we hazard in mere conjecture. We know from the book of Leviticus, that "Moses put an unleavened cake, and an oiled cake, into Aaron's hands, and into his son's hands, and they waved them as a wave-offering before the Lord." (viii. 26, 27.)

How far the language or actions of Melchisedec may lend countenance to the conjecture, that he could have had such an object in view, we do not possess sufficiently valid grounds to determine with

precision; perhaps it better becomes us to forbear, nor arrogate to ourselves the power to interpret signs, which God has not seen fit to explain.

The character of Melchisedec is abundantly typical, though distinguished by no other peculiarities than those contained in the bare letter; and his exhibition of bread and wine, if received as a simple announcement of his quality, is not destitute of salutary instruction.

But of this, at least, we are sure, we have such a high priest; and one who hath an unchangeable priesthood, and who ministers better things than those of Aaron—a priest ordained for ever to minister in things pertaining unto God. He hath an unchangeable priesthood. The orders of the worldly sanctuary may all expire, and her courses be discovered, merely in the records which the oracles of God hand down for our instruction; but Christ abideth a priest for ever. So long as time shall endure, so long shall our high priest exhibit the offering of his bleeding body; the lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, even within the inmost recesses of the holiest of all. Such a high priest we have—he treadeth the wine-press alone—no king of Sodom shares his splendour, or associates himself, either in supplication or the distribution of bounty, to the faithful. Such is our sanctuary—such the temple destroyed and built again, into which we are invited to enter—such the offering

given for us, the acceptable and accepted sacrifice. The high priests of old came forth from the annual entering in, which being offered, year by year, continually, could never make the comers thereunto, perfect. Christ appeared from the grave; and now appears in heaven, with the offering of his own body, which was once offered to bear the sins of many. He hath been "sent forth to be a propitiation, that God might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth;" hath gone, not to abide alone in solitary exaltation, and removed far from the ungrateful world, he died to save; but gone to prepare the way, and make ready the many mansions of his Father's kingdom, for such as have loved unto the end. To him bear all the prophets witness—towards him did the patriarch, Abraham, rear the eye of undoubting faith. After him press that great multitude which no man can number, whom he brings with him into glory. No more the law of a carnal commandment dims the honour, or controls the period of a transitory priesthood, nor the human infirmity of the high priest requires that the atonement be extended for himself, conjointly with the sinners of a perishing congregation.

Our pure Emmanuel withstood, in the flesh, the force of all worldly trials, and came forth from the seven times heated furnace, unharmed by its flames. Him doth it behove us to adore—a king of righteousness, of which he imparts to his followers—a

king of peace he bequeaths them—the Son of God, abiding, a priest, for ever. And what is the high promise vouchsafed to man? Is it not that he, too, may become a Son of God, and partaker of these heavenly glories? The word of the Saviour, and the prayer of the Saviour, have gone forth into all lands, and the voice of the man, Christ Jesus, has pierced the courts of Jehovah; and the entreaty for his believing people, to the Father, is—"Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. . . That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John, xvii. 11, 21.) Oh! may that same persecuted Jesus, whose bright manifestation of himself brought conviction to the heart of the stricken Paul, pour the light of his countenance upon our pilgrimage, and divert us from the paths of wickedness, in which we wander, to run the holy way of his commandments; may he whose glorious appearance opened wide the haven of peace, to the expiring Stephen, unfold the gates of eternal rest to us, miserable sinners.

So shall we see him, as our atonement and sacrifice, a voluntary offering, accepted of the Father, and a full, perfect, and sufficient oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. And such is our high priest, sinless and eternal. And what

are we—steeped in the dregs of all uncleanness, and red with the overflowings of the wine-press of the wrath of God.

From this death of sin—from this dominion of the adversary—from the dread penalty due to our transgressions—from the slavery of Satan, and the sorrow which is without hope, Christ, our high priest, has come to set us free. May our gratitude be as unbounded as the blessing is precious—may the deep devotion of our hearts bear relation to the immensity of his love, and the offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies, on the altar of his sacrifice, give evidence to men and angels of the unfeignedness with which we rejoice over this sacred truth—"We have such an high priest!"

SERMON VI.

HEBREWS, ix. 24.

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

"YET a little while am I with you," (saith Jesus, unto the officers dispatched by the Pharisees to take him,) (John, xiii. 33,) and "I go my way unto him that sent me," (John, xvi. 5,) and to his disciples, "A little while and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." (John, xvi. 16.) . . Both audiences were perplexed by this announcement; the Jews, because he added that, "whither he went, thither they could not come;" his disciples, in that, "as yet they knew not the Father." But our blessed Lord soon removed the cloud which hung over the eyes of his followers, and dispelled all their doubts;

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (xvi. 22.) "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go to the Father." His disciples said unto him, "Lo! now thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb."

Much to like purport speaks the apostle, in the text; and, in language not dissimilar, conveys the same full assurance of hope, and distinct declaration of precious promises. He points to the fulness of that glory which the Son was invested with, and unfolds to the spiritual conception of all who believe in him, the roll of that deep mystery, hidden for ages from the world—"Christ, a righteous advocate with the Father." Christ is represented, in the passage before us, as fulfilling in heaven the office typified by the high priest on earth; while the one enters into the worldly sanctuary, bearing shadows of good things to come, the other, himself the substance of the things hoped for, enters into the heavens, "now to appear in the presence of God for us."

It is meet, in order to the sufficient comprehending of the apostle's declaration, that we should consider and examine,

First—"The holy places made with hands."

Second—"How the Levitical priest entered into them."

Third—"The holy places made without hands."

Fourth—"How our Saviour appears there for us."

Concerning the holy places made with hands, it has pleased God to reveal himself very particularly. St. Paul, speaking of the tabernacle which is called the holy of holies, tells us that it had "the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory, shadowing the mercy seat;" into which "went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." (Heb. ix. 4, 5, 7.) St. Paul details these circumstantials from the records of Moses, whose claim to inspiration and veracity he supports by the sanction of his own. When it seemed good to the heavenly wisdom to ransom the seed of Abraham from Egyptian bondage, gathering it into the promised land, with great mercy, exterior and visible objects were appointed for the purpose of manifesting the unseen superintendence of Jehovah; such as were qualified to engage the attention, and obtain the respect of the wanderers.

Emblems less palpable might have failed in securing their reverence, while a greater degree of outward manifestation would have endangered the spirituality of their worship.

To both these points the Holy Spirit seems to have had regard; consequently, we observe that, while the visible pillar of flame, being of the divine contrivance, was appointed to lead the multitude through the wilderness, the first approaches which they themselves made towards representing, by any external thing, the unseen God, who was their real guide, were visited by his severe displeasure.

So emphatic was his condemnation, so important and decisive the distinction drawn between a visible type of the Deity, and an image set up for adoration, that, while according to the sacred annals a worldly sanctuary, and patterns of heavenly things were ordained, as appertaining to the due celebration of public worship, yet any reverential or devotional adoration of a seen object, was expressly prohibited. Nay, we are informed that, such was the strictness attached to this injunction, that even the claims of kindred, and all the fond and firm affections which engross the human breast, are sternly commanded to be cast away. Such prompt vindication did the offended majesty of God require. "Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of

Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." (Exod. xxxii. 27, 28.)

As believers, we must yield an unreserved assent to the justice of this fearful execution. If God had abandoned the Israelites, in their journey through the wilderness, altogether to their own imagination, it might not perhaps surprise us, that the spectators of idolatry in Egypt should adopt its practices themselves. But the fact, as we know, was far otherwise; the plagues with which Pharaoh and his people had been visited, the miraculous dividing of the waters, the moving pillar, and the various instances wherein the divine authority had been displayed. The tabernacle, and the ark, and the mercy-seat already set up, and their uses declared to the people, left them without excuse.

Of the tabernacle of the congregation, God had expressly said, "There I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory;" and, "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them; I am the Lord their God." (Exod. xxix. 43.) Pursuing the order of the Mosaic account, the apostle conducts his readers through the outer tabernacle, wherein the daily sacrifices were offered, into the holy of holies,

entered by the high priest once every year. He first directs our attention upon the candlestick, composed, as we are informed, of pure gold, with its six branches, and flowers, and knops, and almonds, and seven lamps pouring their streams of living light, to gladden the sanctuary; apt type of that fountain of brighter shining "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John, i. 9.) One of the priestly offices, and not among the least significant, was to maintain these lamps, and prevent their expiring from neglect, or deficiency of oil.

It was clear to many eyes—it was manifest to all persons, who did not look for transitory promises, that this sustained brightness denoted the distinct character of the new covenant which Christ would, in the consummation of ages, appear on earth to establish.

Their number likewise deserves notice; foreshowing, as it manifestly did, that which we find revealed at a later period, where the evangelist, John, recounting his vision, says—"And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God." (Rev. iv. 5.) The table of the shewbread is the next object adverted to by the apostle. A crown of pure gold is stated to have graced it, and twelve loaves of bread, in the ratio of one for each tribe, rested upon it continually. We might probably be induced

without further instruction, to look for some mystical import in this ceremonial. St. Paul, however, does not suffer us to deem it merely an unmeaning pomp; but at once refers it to a higher and holier design. He distinctly alleges that all these things are patterns of the true things in the heavenly kingdom, and as such must be considered. For example, we find no difficulty in comprehending that the golden crown, already spoken of, shadowed forth that crown of glory which Jesus of Nazareth wears in the kingdom of his Father. Placed in the midst of the slain sacrifices, and of living bread, it points, with no unintelligible index, to the believer in Christ's offering; the hope of this enduring promise—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii. 10.) We have observed that these loaves were twelve in number, and that they rested upon the golden table. It was enjoined of Moses that they should be replaced every Sabbath day, by a like quantity, and that those removed should be eaten by the priests only. This exterior testimony may probably have commemorated the grateful sense of kindness past, borne by the twelve tribes towards their great deliverer, who led them through the barren desert to the fair land of Canaan, whose valleys stood thick with corn.

But, doubtless, a spiritual purpose lurked beneath the visible emblem. Through the veil of allegory

the faithful were enabled to discover the advent of that bread of life, which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

These are the holy places of the *outer sanctuary*, enumerated by the apostle as made with hands. They served, according to the written word, for the purposes of the daily sacrifices, and for the ceremonials of ordinary worship; and, as we learn from the Jewish historian, represented the world at large being generally accessible to all men. St. Paul informs us that they composed the "ordinances of divine service," and the "worldly sanctuary of the first covenant;" nor were they, as has been shewn, devoid of allusion, to the better promises of the second; in fact, it seems plain that a common chain of indissoluble links binds both together, no less through the connexion of external and visible types, than by the highest spiritual testimony of prophecy. They are divided, because different, but not opposed, and distinguished, one from the other, as steps of an ascending scale.

The high priest passed through these outer courts and holy places, into the holy of holies, within the second vail. "Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant, and the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims that shadowed the mercy seat." (Heb. ix. 4, 5.) Now, all these ordinances, like those already

considered, are shadows of the true, and patterns of heavenly things.

In the golden censer, for instance, who can fail to discern, with the eye of faith, the acceptable incense of the psalmist's prayer, warm as the fire which burned within it, and unfeigned as that holy composition which the law of Moses protected from the fraud of the imitator, by the penalty of death. A free-will offering of the devout heart, the prayers of saints, spoken of in the book of Revelation as golden viols full of odours.

Nor may we pass over, unregarded, the mystical vessel which contained the manna. Moses narrates that when God fed the Israelites, in the desert, with angels' food, he enjoined that a portion should be enclosed in a golden vessel, and laid up in the ark of the covenant, as a memorial throughout all generations of his merciful providence over his people. It might seem quite a sufficient cause for this injunction, that such a needful recollection of supernatural deliverance should be maintained; and grateful ought any nation or person be, on whom God bestows an emblem, so well calculated to awaken sentiments of thankfulness, and chide the wanderings of the oblivious heart.

And, truly, these were the motives by which the divine command appears to have been guided, but not as restricted to the mere memory of distant mercies. A deeper mystery lay beneath, which

our Saviour expressly recognizes as a type of himself. "He refers the whole to his own body spiritual—"This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." (John, vi. 58.) And, again, the same Evangelist, in the Apocalypse, saith—"Hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna," (Rev. ii. 17,) meaning that he who triumphs under the banners of the cross, should be one in the victory, and nourished in the conflict by the great Captain of his salvation. Therefore, the apostle is fully warranted in describing all these matters as shadows of better things. Shadows indeed, only, yet figures of a coming substance, and sanctified in the truth of God, to the spiritual comfort of all believers; of those early believers, principally, for whom such lights shone. They shone, it is true, in a dark place; but, still, they supplied a continually glowing halo, till the day dawned, and the day-star arose in their hearts. Now, these last-named patterns of heavenly things—the censer, the pot of manna, together with the tables of the law, and Aaron's rod, whose budding announced and confirmed the separation of the tribe of Levi, to priestly offices—were all contained in that sacred vessel—the "ark of God's strength," (Psalm cxxxii. 8,)—"the ark of God,

whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts." (2 Sam. vi. 2.)

Pure and incorruptible in its substance, mysterious in import, holy and reverenced of all the people, whose wanderings it regulated, and whose repose it fixed, the ark of the covenant lived a perpetual theme in the oracles of the prophets, and the glowing measure of the minstrels. For, therein was a Saviour distinctly prefigured; keeping, in himself, inviolate, the law which man had broken, and enclosing the bread of life. And there was typified, a righteous Saviour, fulfilling his gracious promise to his church, that he would abide with it even unto the end of the world. Such was the ark of the covenant, and such holy mysteries did it foreshow; like Christ, it went before the faithful, a shepherd conducting the sheep through the wilderness, to those green pastures which refresh the soul; like Christ, it announced rest to the wearied pilgrim; like Christ, it dried up the fountain of those tears which afflicted humanity sheds, and led men through the gates of death, to that rest which remaineth for the people of God; like Christ, a fiery judgment to consume the adversaries, it crushed to the dust the lofty bulwark, and smote the giant idol, and paralyzed, in death, the royal arm. And though that glory be long faded, and Gentile conquests have scattered the precious deposits to

the winds of heaven, the substance thus convincingly manifested, still endures, and the ark of a Christian covenant still contains a faithful, and a germinating church, overshadowed by the wings of our protecting God, the Saviour. Around it no terrors glare, no plagues avenge the heedless touch, the vail of mystery is rent from the top to the bottom, and men may now rejoice, as they turn to "that which we have heard, which they have seen with their eyes, which they have looked upon, and their hands have handled, of the word of life." (John, i. 1.)

Lastly, we read of the cherubims of glory which overshadowed the mercy seat. We know not whether these two figures signified the two natures of that glorious being to whom the entire fabric bore testimony; or the two churches, the Jewish and the Gentile; or the angels looking with eagerness, admiration, and awe, into the wondrous scheme of man's redemption, which lay beneath. But thus far is plain—there was the mercy-seat; God, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, a holy and a saving type, for mercy is our constant hope; to obtain mercy is our constant prayer. In mercy God heareth our petitions; and in mercy grants them; and there mercy was promised—"There will I meet with thee, (saith the Lord of Hosts,) and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims, which are upon the ark of the testimony." (Exod.

xxv. 22.) There spake the eternal Word of Jehovah, and uttered, in human voice, the immutable will of God. "No man (saith the Saviour) hath seen God, at any time, but the Son; he hath declared him."

Yet, a sensible manifestation attested the divine presence; and counsel sought, and bestowed, revealed his providence and power.

Now, all these types, whatsoever they were, were deposited within the sacred compass of that earliest edifice, wherein the Majesty of the Eternal vouchsafed to dwell, the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple. "But will God (said the awe-struck monarch) in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less, then, this house!" (2 Chron. vi. 18.) We join readily in this exclamation of surprise and confusion; the gates and doors of the everlasting mansions can alone lift up their heads, to receive the King of Glory. But the apostle solves the difficulty in the explanation of the typical character of these holy places, and worldly sanctuary. He tells us that they are figures of the true; hence we are no longer affected with any astonishment, as we survey the fostering care bestowed on them by early worshippers; or that the congregation should entertain towards the structure itself, sentiments of the warmest devotion and love.

To detail the many resemblances between the tabernacle in the wilderness, and subsequently the temple, and him who was made flesh, and tabernacled amongst us, would far exceed the limits ordinarily assigned to discourses from this place. A building ordained by the command of God, and wrought, erected, and sustained, by the full indwelling of his eternal Spirit, and anointed with the oil of gladness, it embraced in its courts, the sacrifices, and the offerings, and the gifts. Thither men bent their prayers.—As to God, through the Saviour, for we have already said that the holy place, designated the human—the most holy—the divine nature of our blessed Lord. Or, again, as some have it, that by the outer court was denoted the church visible; by the holy place, the church invisible; and by the holy of holies, the church triumphant, in glory.

And we may be said to enter mystically into these courts. Into the first by baptism; into the second by regeneration; and by death into the third. And, truly, blessed are they for whom death rends the vail that separates between them and their God. Blessed are they who enter, by faith, into the holiest sanctuary, and, even now, tarrying as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, set their affections upon Jerusalem, which is above, and have their conversation in heaven. . . . .

We now arrive at the second division of the

subject—How the Levitical priests entered into the places made with hands.

The apostle informs us, in these words—"Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God." The nature of these services is set forth in the book of Leviticus. Enough has perhaps been said, to point to their typical character. The ceremonials appear to have principally consisted in the burning of incense at the morning and evening sacrifice, in trimming the lamps, in the weekly removal of the old, and substitution of the new shewbread, and in sprinkling the blood of the sin offering before the vail. Nor were the priests themselves permitted to minister thus in holy things, without undergoing a strict lustration. "Thou (saith God to Moses) shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him; and sanctify him, that he may minister unto me, in the priest's office. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats; and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations." (Exod. xl. 12, &c.) Thus far for the outer tabernacle. "But into the second went the high

priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." (Heb. ix. 7.) "And the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not." (Lev. xvi. 2.) "And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood, with his finger seven times." (Lev. xvi. 14.) And so he was to reconcile "the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar." (verse 20.)

We have not treated of the manifold ways in which the pious of old were wont to pour out the confession of their weaknesses, their necessities, and their desires, upon the simple monuments of their private erection. Of the scarce subsided waters of the deluge, still laving the base of the altar, reared by the zeal, and sanctified by the devotion of Noah; or of the witnessing stars in the canopy of a Syrian sky, which lit the lonely traveller, and beheld his fortitude and holy love. We doubt not the efficacy of prayer so offered; but our concern here lies with the national and congregational assemblages—with the gathering tribes, and the anointed priesthood—with intercessory offerings, and the frame and fabric of a church, transient

and visible, and the type of one invisible and eternal. It would seem not a very profitable speculation to indulge in, how far this individual communing with God might have been retained had man preserved his original state. The vision of this blessedness may be vouchsafed to the glorified spirits in heaven; and the just made perfect, there descry the happiness and the distinctness of perception relating to divine things, which the departure from primal innocence rolled in the dust.

A future world may see once again repaired the vessel of sanctification broken by man as he fell, and the whiteness of a Saviour's apparel overspread the blood-stained garments of sinful human nature.

The apostle, referring to the patterns and types upon earth, saith, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these (sacrifices, &c.), but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." (Heb. ix. 23.) And that better sacrifice is our Blessed Saviour, that holy victim, the Lamb without spot or blemish, who has "entered into the heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

These are, in very deed, the holy places made without hands, and created by the energy of the divine will; in whose formation the delegated intervention of human labour, had no share. Who shall conceive their glory! In vain we elevate our minds by means of these earthly patterns to contemplate

the wonders of the unseen world. A gulph lies between, which no finite faculty can hope to pass; and the burthen of the flesh weighs down the aspiring soul, and chains the reluctant spirit to the ground. But this we know, that God dwells there, of whatsoever character may be the sensible manifestations of his presence; that angels fulfil his commands, and prayer is heard, and the supplications of the contrite heart find a gracious acceptance at the footstool of eternal mercy.

For there abide, the power, and wisdom, and righteousness, and truth of God—surpassing in excellence the bounded span of man's knowledge, and baffling the loftiest conceptions of the human heart. What tongue can tell that which no eye hath seen? What voice shall utter that which no ear hath heard? Who may describe its unknown glories, or climb up into heaven to behold his God? Sorrow and anguish flee away, for God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes: therefore are its blissful precincts full of joy. Holiness is the habitation of his seat, then heaven is holy. His pure eyes cannot behold iniquity, then heaven is pure. Ministering spirits wait beside the golden altar which is before the throne, and offer there the prayers of all saints.

Into these mansions Christ is entered, now to appear in the presence of God for us. How did he enter therein? The apostle informs us—"Even with the blood of the everlasting covenant;" with

that flowing river of full atonement which bore on its surface the ark of the gospel church. Alas! why do we aim at a theme which human intellect fails to embrace; and hope to declare it with human voice.

Somewhat of the marvellous glories of the Saviour, it has been permitted to man to behold—somewhat of his present exaltation is imparted in the revealed word—much is left as an exercise, and a reward to the faith of a Christian.

We know that he wandered along the inhospitable highways of the world, despised, persecuted, and unbefriended. Wonders of pity and of love did indeed mark his progress; but the envious foot of the ungrateful and the unbelieving, followed in his track, and soon obliterated every trace. If the hosannahs of the multitude welcomed him as king to Sion, the murmuring cry that demanded his crucifixion mingled with their echoes.

If his disciples themselves were loud and fervent in the assurance that they would follow him to prison and to death, in the hour of peril they all forsook him, and fled. But a term was set, as well to the earthly sufferings of the Redeemer, as to the alternations of popular sentiment, or the faithless protestations of those whom he loved unto the end. The great sacrifice for sin, which he came to make, was accomplished. The cup his Father gave him to drink of was drained to the very dregs. No longer the judgment

hall of Pilate returned the sound of the taunt, or the scourge. On Calvary's silent hill the lonely cross stood tenantless. No voice disturbed the solemnity of the vacant sepulchre. Each scene of danger, trouble, sorrow, mockery, and blood had passed away, and the Son of man was received up into glory.

Here reason prostrates herself at the feet of faith. Not all that the proudest reach of intellect can aspire to, nor all the vivid hues which fancy may display, can ever impress upon the soul of man the heavenly image of an ascended Saviour. Stephen might descry him standing at the right hand of God, and Saul be blinded by the brightness of his shining; but till this mortal shall have put on immortality, man born of a woman shall not see him as he is.

And why is this glory, which mortal man cannot conceive, displayed before him whom mortal man hath never seen?

Why this effulgent appearance in the presence of God? The text tells us why it hath come to pass; tells that it is for us—for us, fleeting atoms;—for us, rebels against the majesty, and apostates from the holiness of heaven.

For our sakes, "he left the bosom of the Father, and came into the world, that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

For our sakes he left the world, and returned

unto the Father, there to appear in the presence of God for us.

Time might not perhaps admit, nor would it be consistent with the plan I have decided on for this discourse, to enter largely into the remaining question arising from the text, or review, at any considerable length, the quality of that one, only sacrifice, the full, perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. But this source of consolation, hope, and joy, we may not postpone declaring, that he now appeareth to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. By the holy offering of the human body, which had fulfilled the law of righteousness, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,—sanctified by the Father himself, and by the Spirit of him which raised Christ from the dead. By means of this accepted sacrifice, and through that blood which now sprinkleth the mercy-seat of the heaven itself,—by means of this appearing, so adverted to by the apostle, we are saved.

Christ, our atonement sacrificed for us, is brought by himself into the holiest of all, and there offered as our propitiation. Moreover, he is offered in that presence which we dare not, and could not approach, till he opened the new and living way; which way he opened through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and by this flesh, which openeth the way, or are saved according to the power of the resurrection,

to an endless life. And he hath in his own human, but glorified flesh, appeared in the presence of God for us, to be our advocate with the Father, and plead in behalf of the purchased possession, the merits of his own vicarious sacrifice. Thus he appears in the holiest, become a sin-offering, to turn away the fierce anger of the Lord, and dispel by his own rays the clouds of wrath which guilty man had caused to gather around the brow of the Eternal.

He appears for us, as one who would bring many sons with him into glory, and has gone to prepare the mansions, whereinto the justified spirits, sanctified in his truth, have the promise to enter.

Who shall declare the noble works of the Lord, or show forth all his praise? We behold, with open face, the mighty mystery revealed, of the just offered for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. The bleeding victim, that knew no sin, yet made sin a sin-offering, that we who are the real sinners, but not the victims, might become the righteousness of God, in him who was the victim, but not the sinner. Such, my brethren, however imperfectly or obscurely stated, seem to me as the inferences which flow more immediately from the text.

Such, if I rightly divide it, is the word of that all-important truth, the passage before us conveys to the believer's mind.

May it please the Author, from whose treasure-house of love proceedeth every good, and every perfect gift, to bestow on us, who wait (relying on his appearance now) for the manifestation of his glorious and visible appearance hereafter, a bounteous measure of faith, and hope, and love. Thus shall the soul prepare to meet its God. Thus, when the clouds shall cleave asunder, and reveal the Lord of life and glory—when angels and archangels shall descend with a shout, and the Redeemer himself stand, at the latter day, upon the earth, they who endure unto the end shall then be found meet partakers in the benefit of the atonement, made by our great high priest, who hath appeared in the presence of God, for us.

SERMON VII.

HEBREWS, ix. 26.

"But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

THE subject with which we were engaged at our last meeting, is not, I trust, faded altogether from your recollections.

"Our high priest (said the apostle) has appeared in the presence of God, for us." It was then our duty to consider the nature of his appearance. We now arrive at the end it was designed to accomplish; and we need scarcely observe, that the scheme and purport of this appearing had been left quite unexplained, if exposed to the conjectures and incertitude consequent upon the indefinite notice above referred to.

But the inspired writer does not permit us to

remain long in ignorance of the motives which prompted, or the blessings attendant upon, this appearance in the presence of God, and therefore adds, as in the text—" But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The necessity which existed for this awful, but unspeakably valuable intervention, may be found thickly shed on almost every page of Scripture—" The thoughts of men's hearts are only evil continually."—" The whole world lieth in wickedness." " All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Moreover—" The wicked man shall die in his iniquity." These, and numberless other passages of like force, attest the fallen and the hopeless condition of the human race. Day was, however, dawning, for the far spent night had attained to its term. Forth from the chambers of the east rose the Sun of Righteousness.—Before his beams all vapours fled away—at his voice demon and oracle were still. The tainted stream of false philosophy mocked the thirst it could not assuage, till the Saviour, casting in the wood of his cross, sweetened the bitter flood, and men drank of the waters of life freely.

Now, at what time this mystery was achieved, and where, and how, and by what sacrifice sin was put away, are matters deeply affecting our eternal interests. To these subjects we propose addressing

ourselves in this discourse; and may the Spirit of wisdom from above, direct, sanctify, and govern our labours, and teach us what and how to speak—and you, my brethren, how to hear.

Three separate appearances are ascribed to our Saviour in the Gospel of the new covenant—His appearance in the world—His appearance in the presence of God for us—and his appearance at the latter day upon the earth. These three appearances of the High Priest of our profession, are conformable to the typical manifestations made by the Jewish high priest, in the prefiguring sacrifices of the law. *First*—the high priest, in the Mosaic ritual, appeared to the people in the tabernacle of the congregation, where the sin-offering was slain.

In like manner our High Priest appeared to the world, which answereth to the tabernacle of the congregation, and became himself the sin-offering slain for man's transgression. *Secondly*—The high priest in the Mosaic ritual, appeared in the holy of holies, with the blood of the slain victim, as an atoning sacrifice. So too, did our High Priest enter into the holiest of all, into heavenly places, with his own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us. *Thirdly*—As in the Temple, when the atonement was accepted, the high priest reappeared to bless the expectant worshippers, our High Priest also will again appear to them that wait for him, without sin, unto salvation.

In pursuing our present inquiry, we may, I presume, dismiss the last-mentioned appearance from our consideration, for it is spoken of in the future tense, as a matter still to come to pass, when the apostle wrote. At the period when that event shall occur, there will be no longer a sacrifice for sin required. I mean that the sacrifice having accomplished its object, may be removed,—and the altar fires extinguished, and silence imposed for ever upon the priestly intercession. But in the passage before us, the apostle manifestly treats of an event, not future, but then enacting. He saith of the Saviour, that he hath appeared—to put away sin. Now, sin was certainly not put away in the apostle's days, actually, or universally, but only prospectively and from the faithful. In fact, this putting away of sin was merely progressing towards its final accomplishment; so did the appearance, by which sin was eventually to be put away, partake necessarily of this continuous character, as doth Christ's mediation in heaven;—moreover, the *sacrifice* for sin, though indeed ever *offering* in the presence of God, was then past—consequently the final appearance of our Saviour cannot have been intended—or have fallen within the view of the apostle. We might, perhaps, be more disposed to receive the appearance of our Lord and Saviour in the flesh, as approaching to the meaning of the inspired writer.

It is true, for the word of truth hath pronounced

it, that "the *grace of God*, that bringeth salvation, hath *appeared* to all men, teaching them that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Titus, ii. 11.) It is, however, clear that this passage cannot be admitted as referring to the *person*, but rather to the office of the Saviour, for if the former interpretation could be admissible, he would seem rather in the capacity of teaching than sacrificing.

Nor while it is, of course, conceded, that the blood shed upon the cross does, in fact, constitute the sacrifice for sin, still we must bear in mind, that though shed it was not yet offered within the vail. The victim was indeed slain in sight of the congregation, but the high priest had not yet brought the blood into the holy of holies. In other words, Christ, our lamb slain, our high priest, had not yet ascended with his own blood into the presence of the Eternal Father, consequently, the oblation made upon the cross was still an unaccepted satisfaction.

On earth, the great mystery of godliness had been finished, and the sacrifice of the Lamb, "slain from the foundation of the world," solemnly performed. "God was manifest in the flesh—justified in the Spirit—seen of angels—put to death upon the cross—but the blood of his atonement was still without the vail, he was not yet received up into glory."

He appeared as a teacher of righteousness, as a guide to all truth, as a light to lighten the Gentiles, as a glory of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth.

True, Christ came into the world to save sinners; but not fully to save them while he remained in the world; his office was rather to warn, to exhort, to admonish, to receive believers into his church, and strengthen them with his Spirit, that they might abide in it for ever. And, consequent upon this believing and final perseverance, was the assurance of everlasting life; he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved. Now, Christ expressly says, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." (John, xvi. 28.) And, lest his disciples should question the necessity of this departure, to secure them privileges and benefits they would not otherwise have acquired, he observes—"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away, that the Spirit of truth may come; who, when he is come, shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you."

Now, these Scriptures plainly denote the imperfection of his worldly appearance to put away sin; and, truly, Christ's own words to Pilate, make manifest the object of it. "For this cause came I

into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (John, xviii. 17.)

We cannot, therefore, admit that the appearance spoken of by the apostle, in this passage, may refer to the coming of our Saviour upon earth, at the period of his incarnation. . . True it is, that the Levitical sin-offering was virtually abolished by the sacrifice of himself, as declared in the text. That real sacrifice fulfilled the law, and annulled the obligation to reiterate the offering of the type. Hence the Saviour saith, as he gave up the ghost, "It is finished." The sacrifice for sin, the end of the law for righteousness, was entirely accomplished, in so far as related to its fulfilment in this world. But the *presentation* of it still remained undone, and to this the apostle bears testimony in the text, when he says—"He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that is—for in such sense we do not hesitate to receive it—he hath appeared, with his crucified body, in the presence of God, before the mercy-seat in heaven. And this we take to be the subject with which we have to do—that he entered into the presence of God, or, as the passage before us hath it, that he appeared *once*, and at end of the world, to put away sin, or the sin-offering, by the sacrifice of himself. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in *once* into the holy

place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. ix. 12.)

It was customary for the people, according to the Levitical law, to bring the victims, at least a considerable number of them, to the temple: the priests received, and offered, and slew them. In our law the people neither can, nor do, bring anything. Our high priest brings all, and is all in all; for he brings, and offers himself, and his own blood. "For such an high priest became us, (who is) holy, harmless, undefiled; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, for this he did once, when he offered up himself." (Heb. vii. 26.)

The apostle further tells us, that the recurrence of the atonement, year by year continually, was designed by the Holy Spirit, to signify that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. But, as our Saviour has entered into it, it follows that the annual offering is no longer demanded. Times, and seasons, and years, merge in his eternal attributes, or lie bound in his infinite essence. The same yesterday, today, and for ever—he presents the undying oblation of his wounded and bleeding body, once, for all, offered—once, and for ever, entered into the holiest of all—once, and for ever, have the gates of glory lift up their heads to receive the returning Jesus. Now, once, in the end of

the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

It is little, my brethren, to say that this doctrine extends itself far beyond mere theoretical conclusions; and yet, had it no other claim to our regards than as being expletive of so many of the observances belonging to the earlier covenant, we should feel, and acknowledge ourselves indebted to the apostle for much important elucidation. But the whole phrase is obviously calculated to convey profound practical instruction. By it, as we are admonished on the one hand, that other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ; so, on the other, it is told us that to them who obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. We have dwelt sufficiently long upon the single, unrepeated, character of this one offering of himself—once offered, and may, therefore, now approach the portion of the text which specifies the period at which this offering was made.

The Scripture declares it to have occurred at the end of the world; or, as it may be translated, "at the consummation of ages," when the hidden mystery was revealed, and the day which Abraham saw afar off, and was glad, had arrived. The dispensations made known by Moses had effected the design for which the divine wisdom had planned their enactment, and, therefore, had reached their

close. A schoolmaster to bring men to Christ—the law had fulfilled its office. Its builders had hewn the stones from the quarry, and moulded and polished them, and laid them down on Sion's hill, to be edified into the membership of the spiritual church, and aptly joined together in the invisible union of the mystic temple. So far a progress was effected towards future righteousness to be revealed; but "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, could never make the comers thereunto perfect." (Heb. x. 1.) So God, who wouldeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that all men should turn from their wickedness and live, devised the scheme of salvation; and, in his mercy and love towards mankind, "Sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," (Gal. iv. 3, 4,) and to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past. Until, however, the period of this manifestation had arrived, a daily sacrifice, and a continual sin-offering, smoked upon the altar of Jehovah; thus, by the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, men sought to procure the favor of God, and avert his wrath; the legal purification was accomplished, but the conscience was still defiled with sin. Yet, though a ministration of death, we cannot deny that it was glorious. Glorious even in its dark system of condemnation—

glorious as the outer gate through which the prophets and fathers entered by faith into the inward sanctuary, preluding upon their harps, the approaching advent of their expected Lord. So, too, when the portals of the heavenly temple, not made with hands, threw open their wide doors, then appeared the Saviour to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

If joy was in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, and that these spiritual intelligences do rejoice, the unerring word assures us, with what triumphant hallelujahs must the sacred courts have rang when he, the conqueror, returned ;—when he returned, who took from death its sting, and won victory from the grave.

No more the heavenly host weep over the destinies of a ruined world ; the secret buried in the bosom of the Father, was then fully revealed, and God proved to be himself just, when the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. . . . But how, we may ask, did this sacrifice of the Saviour himself, put away sin? Was it as though it removed from our path a viper, or a stone? or has sin been destroyed, or abrogated, or extinguished? for in such various senses may the word be interpreted. We answer that, however variously the same term may be used in other passages, it does not appear to possess, in this under our consideration, any of the above meanings. Nor need we here embarrass

ourselves with inquiring into the nature, or abstract quality, of the sin put away; whether habitual, or actual, or original, or the guilt of it, or the punishment attached to it. One clear truth has been vouchsafed us, and may fully suffice; Scripture, in unequivocal terms, declares that the blood of Christ cleanseth from *all sin*—from sins of omission—from sins of commission—from sins of thought, of word, and of deed—from the foul taint of original transgression—from the dark stain of uncontrolled affections—from the unruly tongue—from the impure desire, unuttered but unsubdued—from each—from all, the blood of Christ cleanseth. Who would forego the tranquil happiness of such full assurance—who would exchange the prospects of futurity seen through the bright atmosphere of a Saviour's atonement, for those uncertain phantoms of imaginary good, which vain philosophy causes to pass before the deluded eyes of its votaries, and flit through the mists of human prejudice, or pride, or error.

Nay, friends, it becomes us, in humble self-abasement, to prostrate ourselves at the feet of him who so loved us; and, like him, be dead indeed unto sin—like him, and by him, and through him who alone can raise us up, now or ever to live unto righteousness, and like him enjoy its end, everlasting life.

It seems to me that the apostle designs to draw

a continued comparison between the typical sacrifices of the ancient law, and their fulfilment in the new. If so, we shall best attain to an apprehension of his meaning by an examination, in detail, of the Levitical offerings for sin. The law of the sin-offering for the people, was as follows:—"Then shall he (the priest) kill the goat of the sin-offering that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat." (Lev. xvi. 15.) Such was the ceremony enjoined Aaron to pursue; and these things, we are told, are patterns of the heavenly.

Then we observe that an offering for sin was made at the tabernacle of the congregation, which being but typical and representative of the real offering of Christ himself, was, by Christ's substitution of himself, removed or put away. It was, in fact, and *literally*, *put away* by the Christian sacrifice, for he who was offered upon the cross, caused these atoning types to cease over the earth, by that offering which he made; and, moreover, being entered into the holy place not made with hands, into the heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us, hath borne our sins upon him, and put away them for ever, by the sacrifice of himself.

The comparison instituted, or, perhaps we should more correctly say, the parallelism discovered between the sacrifices treated of, does not refer to

any consideration of the Lord's Christ, introduced into heaven as connected with some other imaginary sacrifice therein already existing, but rather compares the sacrifice of Christ, made on earth, afterwards to be offered in heaven, with worldly sacrifices for sin slain and offered on earth. Of these sacrifices offered upon earth, we know that they consisted of bulls, and goats, and other inferior animals, concerning which the apostle remarks that, however they might sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." (Heb. ix. 14.) The law for righteousness being fulfilled in our Saviour, the law for works became dead, the covenant of grace drove out the covenant of works, for the son of the bondwoman could not be heir with the son of the free, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus reigned triumphant over the ordinances of sin and death. Hence the psalmist saith, speaking by inspiration and prophecy, "Burnt offering, and sacrifice for sin, hast thou not required, (Psalm xlvi. 6,) or, as the apostle expresses it, in application to the Saviour, "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared for me;" observing, in illustration of the passage, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

That is, he taketh away the bodies of bulls and of goats, that he may establish the body of Christ, made perfect by sufferings.

The sin-offering, which heretofore bled upon the altars of Jerusalem, now crimsoned them no longer. For wicked men erected the altar of the cross, where was slain and crucified, the Son of God, voluntarily offered to bear the sins of many. . . And this offering abolished, for ever, the sin-offering of the ancient covenant; for Christ, our passover sacrificed for us, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

It is fortunate for reason that the revealed word has delivered us from the burthen of inquiring into the causes which moved the eternal wisdom to devise and accept of this substitution of the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. We are told, in one word, that love was the impelling motive—love for a world ruined by sin, and at enmity with its Creator. Whence sprang this feeling, or how it arose belongs not to us know; even in the sacrifice itself, much that is obscure—much that is mysterious, must ever bar the avenues through which the light of revelation would penetrate, to illumine the finite intellect of man—much will ever remain unexplained at this side the grave. Not that it is forbidden us to devote our faculties to the investigation of religious mysteries, and

strive, if we may, to unveil the secret things that belong to God.

On the contrary, the apostle enjoins us, in many passages, to give all diligence,—to stir up the gift that is within us—to labour after wisdom, to study, to meditate, to read earnestly; in fact, it seems quite clear that we receive our mental powers as a trust fund to be improved, and that the highest and most zealous employment of them in search of hidden truth, when accompanied by humility and prayer, is not only not displeasing to God, or likely to derogate from the submissiveness of undoubting faith, but is well pleasing in his sight, renders faith itself more willing, and is a reasonable service.

For where can responsibility more properly attach than to the due exercise of the nobler qualities of the mind; and on what can the mind so well bestow all its energies, as upon the great, though for the present, the perhaps hidden truths of the almighty counsel. But we are forced to confess the difficulties imposed by the subject now under consideration. True, that it is easy to conceive the typical relationship existing between the sacrifices of the ancient and those of the new law, and to discern that the illustration of the latter furnishes a key by which the whole treasure-house of the former is unlocked. It is likewise easy to understand how a debt due by one person may be discharged by another, or even

the substitution of the innocent for the guilty—(not that the justice of this latter can be made apparent upon ordinary human principles)—weak and limited as we are, our minds can yet embrace all these subjects, and attain to fitting conclusions.

But to fathom the depths of the eternal wisdom, and thence to draw forth some fragments of those counsels which devised the substitution of the Son of God upon the cross, in lieu of the eternal punishment due to sin; or to appreciate duly the character, and efficacy, and mode, of his ordained mediation: these do truly surpass all our powers, and leave baffled reason to hide its head in unutterable confusion.

For who but the infinite Creator could devise a scheme so vast—who but God himself could venture on proposing a sacrifice so tremendously awful? Could the wise of the world? No, friends; the world by wisdom knew not God. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son hath revealed him. As little did the wise men of the world know the Son—"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Did holy men of old? Alas! these holy men had indeed revelations of the Lord their righteousness, and many among them looked anxiously towards those everlasting hills from whence their help should come; but how feeble must have been their conceptions of the great sacrifice for sin—

how inadequate were reason to unfold the roll of its mystery. Did angels? No. We find that these were mysteries into which angels desired to look.

So then that mystery, which the world nor saints nor angels could plan, was formed in the bosom of God himself, through the power of the divine love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John, iii. 16.) For by sin death came into the world, and this death was the consequence of Adam's transgression, and death had passed on all men, in that all had sinned. But in Christ, the second Adam, all were made alive. The sacrifice of himself put away sin, and buried its wages, death, in the grave, whence it shall never more arise. . . Further, that this sacrifice was made in the human nature of Christ, holy Scripture assures us, in that it declares—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death." (Heb. ii. 14.) For if he had not taken our nature upon him, neither had he known death, nor yet had he anything to offer for us; and "every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat to offer."

Of what then could that offering properly consist? Perhaps we are incapable of arguing this

point. But we know of what it did consist, for the text announces it. It consisted of our blessed Lord himself. With no sacrifice of inferior value could sin have been put away. What nobler offering could have been made? What more likely to propitiate the favor, or awaken mercy in the breast of the God of heaven.

And is it, then, by this sacrifice of mortal flesh and blood—I mean of such flesh and blood as saw the grave—that Christ hath saved the world? Of mortal flesh and blood, exposed, while tabernacling among us, to pain, and death, and rescued from the evil one, and his dominion, the grave, by the power of the divine essence.

Brethren, the reflections which such truths awaken within us, are no less proud and cheering than in all verity they are profoundly awful.

It is no light matter to be assured, that these perishable tenements of clay, which here we so wantonly abuse, or vainly slight, or idly boast of, as passion, or fancy, or caprice, point the wayward finger. It is no light matter to be assured, that they may yet put on Christ, and dwell with him in the holy city, in Jerusalem, which is above, and over all. "Oh that men were wise, that they understood this—that they would consider their latter end"—(Deut. xxxii. 29,)—that they would ponder well, ere that irrevocable hour come, and the fleeting spirit pass away, what it really is, to have yielded

their members, as servants to iniquity. What it is, in the day of battle, to have recruited the ranks of the adversary, with the auxiliary band, the drunkard, the glutton, the fornicator. Would to God, that all sensualists, of every class, and addicted to every variety of carnal gratification, could witness, as they cast the seeds of sin upon the earth, a soldier, full-armed, spring up ready to assail the hosts of Jehovah.

Yet it is to this inevitable consequence that sensual indulgence leads; to take one warrior from the phalanx of Christ, and range him on the side of the destroyer. But we will not continue these reflections now. Is this, we ask, the conduct of those who believe at all in the promises of a future state of being? Barter we for these light enjoyments—if, indeed they be enjoyments—the exceeding weight of glory assured to persevering virtue.

Alas, observation and experience too often demonstrate how easily men abandon the highest aspirings of which our nature is susceptible, and spurn at the promises in Christ Jesus. These are they who flee the company of angels, the spirits of the just made perfect, the multitude of the saints in light. Yet Christ hath associated himself in holy fellowship with these very saints. *There*, is his human body, and *there* may ours be also; changed indeed, and glorified in a manner far surpassing our comprehension; but, still, the same as are now

inhabited by our souls and spirits—still the same as now, we are told, are temples of the Holy Ghost. And what imports it that all this be a mystery, not to be unravelled while we remain in the flesh? Surely we may make some allowance for the obscurity in which finite capacities must ever involve eternal things. Is it not enough that the Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirit that these things are so? That convictions firm as that we have seen with our eyes, or our hands have handled, testify that the Saviour's body is the fountain whence flow the streams of an endless life. The sole sacrifice for sin, the ransom price for the redeemed, the first-born among many brethren.

And you—dear followers of Jesus—you who have felt the workings of the evil principle in the hidden man—who, "groaning and travailing in pain together until now, wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." (Rom. viii. 23.) Ask of your hearts what gratitude is due to him who hath offered himself upon the cross; and, by that sacrifice, utterly abolished the whole body of sin.

And this hath Christ done, reconciling the world unto God. And this hath Christ, our passover, done, sacrificed for all. He hath appeared, now, once—once offered to bear the sins of many, and so, for ever, hath sat down at the right hand of God. He hath appeared at the *end of the*

world ; no new saving dispensation need henceforth be expected, for none is promised ; to this generation shall no new sign be given, save the sign of the Son of man.

He hath appeared to put away all other sin-offering—to extinguish, in the brightness of his own rising, the pale fires which flicker upon the altars man's self-righteousness would rear ; and pour the blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than that of Abel, to the purifying of heavenly places.

Here, for the present, we shall pause ; may God, of his infinite mercy, guide all your thoughts, and holy conversation, to that blessed region of peace and love, where the Lamb abideth.

He, your sacrifice, is now within the vail, sanctifying the holy of holies with his most precious blood. The whole mortal company of believers tarry in this lower world, as in the outer court of the temple, waiting for the reappearing of the Son of man. And, doubtless, our high priest will come again to bless the expectant worshippers. Brethren, look now, in faith, on him whom sin hath pierced—look to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. True, there be blind who will not see him ; and deaf, who will not hear him ; and dumb, who will not praise him ; but blessed be his holy name, the outer court is not all void of sincere votaries ; and many a tongue will still be vocal, and many a listening ear catch the first shouts of the descending

saints, and many an anxious eye discern the opening heavens, whence Christ comes forth, now our sacrifice for sin; but in that bright hour of general restitution, a sacrifice no more, but appearing to those who look for him a second time without sin unto salvation.

SERMON VIII.

HEBREWS, x. 14.

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

"ART thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Such was the inquiry made by the disciples of John, of our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh. The answer returned is deeply remarkable.—Christ does not declare himself in direct terms, the expected Messiah, whose announced arrival had scattered trouble through the mind of Herod, and of the city of Jerusalem. He rather refers them to the more sure word of prophecy, for to him bear all the prophets witness, and bids them go show John, again, the things that they did hear and see, and compare the prediction with its fulfilment in himself.

Isaiah, speaking by the Spirit of God, had said

of Christ's coming—"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." (Isaiah, xxxv. 5.)

Our blessed Lord, applying this prophecy to himself, said unto the inquirers, "Go show John again the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them; and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." (Matt. xi. 4, 5, 6.)

Now, the apostle, in the text, directs his brethren precisely to the same point. They had long been subject to lying vanities—he strives to turn them to serve the living God. Addressing his epistle to men convinced of sin, and awake to the certainties of retributive judgment, he shows the one only way through which the penalties due to transgression could be averted; and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in it.

It was quite consistent with the education St. Paul had received, that he should look upon all believers in divine providence, as anxious to discover through what means the divine favor might be propitiated. His countrymen, the Jews, had imagined themselves to have arrived at the very

perfection of method, by their national ceremonials and purifications. To all these things he had himself added a zeal of surpassing ardour, and a persecution, even unto death, of whosoever professed the Christian faith.

In these practices he had once boasted; but they had now become his sorrow and shame, for God was pleased to remove from his eyes the scales of prejudice and error; and Paul, the apostle, having received his sight, was enabled to descry, in that new, but well-loved master, him whose voice called him to glory and virtue—the "one offering that hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Let us then accompany the apostle in his inquiry, and praying that the grace of God may enlighten and assist our endeavour, apply our thoughts to holy meditation upon the subject set before us in the text. The one "offering that hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." In pursuance of this design, it behoves us to inquire, in order,

What that one suffering is.

Who are the sanctified.

How the sanctified are perfected.

I conceive these to be the questions presented to our consideration, and I pray that we may obtain to such a clear understanding as men would desire, who seek the knowledge of the law of righteousness at the fountain of all wisdom.

What the one offering is, the blessed Saviour him-

self has graciously vouchsafed to tell us—"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke, xxiv. 25, 26, 27.)

Christ, then, was the offering—an offering of expiation for sin—an offering of peace with God—a whole burnt-offering to the Father.

And well, and justly, does the apostle assert the inadequacy of any other offering to take away sin. His reflections on this subject have already been considered in a previous discourse. He declares expressly, that the law was but a shadow, and not the reality of the good things its observances denoted; and as shadows are necessarily devoid of power, so the law did not possess a purifying efficacy in itself, but was merely a typical representation of the one great healing sacrifice, a future age should develop.

Hence men who looked beyond the ceremonial objects that struck the eye, discerned, through the clouds which hung over them, the real value of the things unseen, and learned to appreciate the true character of those legal rites which failed to erase the deeply graven pollutions of the soul.

Addressing the church at Gallatia, the inspired writer says—"But now, after that ye have known

God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Gal. iv. 9.) These elements did indeed shadow forth innocency of life, but failed to impart it; they convinced the sinner of his obligation to satisfy the justice of God, but they did not justify the sinners; yet, amidst all these deficiencies, they figured forth Christ, who himself fulfilled the whole law.

The result of this fulfilment is asserted in the text, and a reason assigned for the Saviour's everlasting rest—namely, that by the one offering the entire design was achieved. The worshippers had no longer occasion for repeated purifyings; they were, by this one, perfected and sanctified. But what was the effect produced by this purification, and sanctification? No less than that those who were the objects of it, became henceforth, and for ever, capable of serving the eternal Father within the vail. The blood of the Lamb slain, washed away the foul stain, and the ascending incense bore the prayer of the repentant sinner into the presence of the merciful God. To the wiles of Satan, to the terrors of concience, to the failing spirit, or inconstant mind, the believer opposes the ready shield—Christ, his rock of defence—Christ, his offering, the perfect atonement, the full expiation, the way of holiness, the truth, the life, the fountain through which the worshipper must pass; the

expression of the heavenly will—"By the which will (saith the apostle) we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. x. 10.) . . . This, then, is the offering spoken of in the text, of which it is said that it hath perfected, for ever, them that are sanctified.

Now, before we proceed to ascertain the quality of that perfection promised, we might, as I conceive it, profitably inquire, what are the chief characteristics of those persons to whom it shall belong; in other words, who are sanctified?

By the use of this term we are naturally led to the consideration, that a certain broad distinction must exist amongst mankind, affecting the reception they give to the doctrine of the Saviour's atonement.

Had the one offering mentioned in the text, availed to the perfecting of all men, then would not the apostle have made the specialty; but it plainly appears that a portion only of the world is elected to that state, and that portion which God, in Christ, hath chosen as vessels made to honour.

Now, these are by the apostle styled "sanctified," and to them only, it is clear, belongs the privilege of being perfected for ever.

But the word sanctified is of various significations. For instance, to separate and appoint any thing to an holy and religious use, as the Sabbath day, the vessels

of the sanctuary, the priests, the altars, the sacrifices; or to cleanse the sinner from the pollution, and free him from the dominion of sin, as in the address of St. Paul to the Corinthians—"And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Or to manifest his glory, and vindicate his honour, from the blasphemies of wicked men, as in the book of Numbers: "This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them." (Numb. xx. 13.) Or, again, to magnify the great name of Jehovah, by visible demonstrations of his majesty and truth. Our Saviour ascribes sanctification to himself, when he saith, "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God." (John, x. 36.) Now, the apostle tells us, that "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. ii. 11.) Our Saviour cannot acknowledge as brethren any other than those who have died unto sin, and become alive unto righteousness; and these become his brethren, first, through that death which follows the condition of doing the will of his Father; for as Christ, in performing that will, became obedient unto the death of the cross, so too must his brethren mortify their members that are upon the earth, and die unto sin: and as Christ was raised from the dead, and dieth no more,

and becomes the first-born among many brethren, so too he leads these brethren along with him, as being like himself sons of the resurrection, over whom the second death hath no power. "Now, these persons being regenerate and born anew, and being effectually called, and having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified really and personally by this word and spirit dwelling in them." (Westminster Confession.) The celebrated Whitfield thus conceives of it:—"Their understandings, which were before dark, now become light in the Lord, and their wills, before contrary to, now become one with the will of God; their affections are now set upon things above; their memories are now filled with divine things; their natural consciences are now enlightened; their members, which were before instruments of uncleanness, and of iniquity unto iniquity, are now instruments of righteousness and true holiness; in short, they are new creatures: old things are passed away, all things are become new, in their hearts. Sin hath now no more dominion over them; they are freed from the power, though not from the in-dwelling and the being of it: they are holy, both in heart and life, in all manner of conversation; they are made partakers of a divine nature; they dwell in Christ, and he in them; they are living temples of the Holy Ghost. It is thus that they are vitally united with Christ, as their Head, by a living faith;

they are one with Christ, even as he and the Father are one." . . If the apostle have really designed, in the use of the term sanctified, an acceptation so high as this, it might seem almost to imply the absence of all necessity for further purification. For what appears wanting to complete the Christian man, fully furnished to all good works, beyond the qualifications already described, seeing that they are alleged to flow from faith as the fountain spring. But I conceive that St. Paul adopts the phrase in its simpler sense, as merely a holy separation from the world to religious duties and purposes; and, in conformity with the ancient Levitical sacrifices, these worshippers, or believers, were solemnly set apart, and required the purification prescribed by the law of Moses. If, then, we transfer these typical ceremonials to the spiritual purifyings they represented, we shall arrive at a comprehension of the real sanctification required under the gospel covenant, even for the purpose last adverted to.

The sanctified in Christ could alone be purified by his offering, that is, by the sacrifice of himself. Now, Christ tells us that, previous to his offering himself as a sacrifice, he underwent a sanctification, or holy preparation and setting apart; and this was accomplished in his life of trial, and purity, and obedience. Therefore he saith, in relating his love towards his disciples, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the

truth. Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth." (John, xvii. 19—17.) And this was the anointing by which the followers of our Lord were set apart to the sacred office, even by the expiatory offering of himself; and they that are sanctified are such as being washed in his blood, which flows as a fountain for all uncleanness, are through it so purified, as that they may draw near to God. For "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the camp," (Heb. xiii. 12,) fulfilling in himself the law of the sin-offering on the great day of expiation.

That the object of this purification was to render the people under the old law clean, so that they might participate in the congregational privileges, is obvious, as well in many other places as in the instance of Hezekiah. It appears of that monarch, that he had restored the neglected ordinances of religion, and procured a due sanctification of the temple, the vessels, and of many among the people, so that the festival of the passover might be fitly partaken of.

Some there were, however, amongst the members, who, through ignorance or inadvertence, had neglected to sanctify themselves after the prescribed ceremonials : "For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulon, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written; but

Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, the good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people." (2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19, 20.)

I adduce this passage as expletive of the design of sanctification in the sense, as it appears to me, in which the apostle uses the word in the Scripture before us; and as the sin-offering was made that the people might be holy, and the priests also purified to appear before the Lord, so too it is required of all worshippers under the Gospel dispensation, that they be washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus: and the Psalmist seems to have respect to this necessity, when he exclaims, "I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to thine altar." (Psalm xxvi. 6.)

Now, though the sanctification referred to in this chapter, may design no more than a holy setting apart to sacred purposes; yet it alike follows, that that operation is only performed by the means spoken of—the spirit of Christ animating the dead worshippers, and its holy influences breathing into them a righteous life. And thus is Christ made sanctification to the believer; who is, through Christ, enabled (which formerly he could not do) to glorify God both with soul and body; to be translated from the kingdom of Satan into the

kingdom of God's dear Son; to put off "the old man, which is corrupt; and to put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. iv. 22, 24.) How unspeakably precious is such a promise. Led by its light, the believer walks securely on his way—the chains of sin fall off, as though unlocked by some master-hand—the sentence of bondage is blotted out by the writing of the perfect law of liberty. Well might the apostle call once and again, on believers, to rejoice in the Lord—to be like himself, if sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; to rejoice for the kingdom of God is in them. To rejoice as men who are changed from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord. For Christ, the Redeemer, lifts up the light of his countenance, and pours the vivifying rays of the sun of righteousness, upon the heart, and the love of God shed abroad in it, bedews it with heavenly grace; and the spirit of holiness gently blows upon it; and each, and all, promote the growth of those good gifts which are from above, from him whence every one of them proceeds.

So are believers filled with the fulness of God. So do the freed from sin experience, practically, a joy unspeakable and full of glory—a share of that glory of God which can never be advanced by the bondage of a sinner. "For there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the

Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made (them) free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. viii. 1, 2.) . . Of those who are thus sanctified, it is next affirmed that the one offering has perfected them for ever.

We have already been informed by the apostle, that the gifts and sacrifices of the ancient law could never make the comers thereunto perfect in things pertaining to conscience. But, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, (a sin-offering,) and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. viii. 3.) And, moreover, he adds, that Christ was the minister of a greater and more perfect tabernacle; and, therefore, entitled to demand a superior sanctification of the worshippers. But we have now to do with the perfection of which Christ is the author; the faith of the worshipper we must consider as already evidenced by his sanctification; and his fitness to join in the service of the spiritual temple decided, upon the same testimony.

Something, however, remains incomplete; and, as Christ was the author, to him also belongs the glory of being the finisher, by the one offering of himself. The apostle points somewhat to this subject when he addresses the Galatians, in expostulation—"Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. iii. 3.) In

this question he would express the ignorance which presumed upon terminating a spiritual labour by a ceremonial one; or placing upon the fabric of a Christian's temple, any other corner-stone than Jesus Christ. Yet the necessity of spiritual sanctification appears to have caught the attention of the faithful of old; so David exclaims—"Cleanse thou me from my secret faults;" casting himself, at once, upon him to whom all hearts are open, in full dependence upon his power and willingness to make clean; and, again, under the influence of a like aspiration after holiness, "Create in me a clean heart, O God! for God is good unto such as are of a clean heart." (Psalm li. 10.)

Something, as we have already said, remained to be done after sanctification; and as Christ was the author, so, too, was he the finisher. This finish, or completion, the apostle expresses by the term perfected, which implies an entire fitness to enter into glory with himself—with him to enter into the holiest in heaven—to be worshippers in Jerusalem which is above, and rest the endless Sabbath, according to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. And, being become perfect in the vocation wherewith they are called, as men who had left behind them first principles, and beggarly elements; they are delivered from all the guilt, power, and punishment, of sin; and put into the sure possession of endless felicity; and this is secured to

them for ever, in consequence of Christ's perpetual priesthood, for those who come unto him he will in no wise cast out, and he ever liveth to make intercession for us. The Levitical priesthood could not do this; not being, as Melchisedec, priests for ever, but rather belonging to an order that was to be dissolved. The law was indeed twice inadequate—it could not make the comers thereto perfect for ever—it could not make them perfect at all.

Not for ever—for, then, had its sacrifices ceased to be offered, there would have been no more conscience of sin—no longer the corroding troubles and disquietudes which afflict the mind tormented by the pains, or haunted by the terrors of guilt and sorrow; no rising alarms, for the sense of an abiding sacrifice would have stilled them for ever. No atonement made year by year continually, confessing, in language not to be misunderstood, the imperfection of the law to take away sin for ever. Nor yet would it make them perfect at all, seeing that it was but the shadow, and not the very substance, of good things to come; thus was the law twice imperfect. . . "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God." (Heb. vii. 19.)

Now even, had the law been in itself adequate to the perfecting of the worshippers, could men have

obeyed its requisitions? The Jews complained of it as a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, and strove to evade the severity of its enactments by every practicable subterfuge or substitution.

Whosoever of the nation were believers in prophecy, knew that the law was only imposed as a covenant till the times of reformation—"The people at large trembled at the condemnatory sentence; cursed is he that confirmeth not all the words of this law, to do them. (Deut. xxvii. 26.) And, in the latter days, the thunders of Jehovah, still hoarsely murmuring through the clouds of time, declared by the lips of his apostle—"By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Rom. iii. 20.) . . But what the law could not do, the offering of the Son of man effected, perfecting the worshippers for ever, and brought them holy and undefiled into the "Heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb. xii. 22, 23.) But we shall further learn what meaneth this word "perfecting," by applying it to our Saviour himself. The apostle tells us that he was made perfect through sufferings. These sufferings do indeed embrace a period of much greater duration than is comprised in the mere agonies of his crucifixion and death; being

throughout his entire sojourn on earth, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His patient endurance in well-doing, his entire forgiveness of injustices, and the deep feeling of compassion for the wants, and miseries, and sinfulness, of human creatures, furnish to us an example of holiness, as bright as it is inimitable. And it were well that we reflected more profoundly upon the character of Christ, and sought, by diligence and prayer, to draw near the beauty we may not equal; we should by such an exercise, dispose our minds, not alone to a higher degree of sanctity and Christian effort, but even strip the doctrines of atonement of many of their difficulties, and commend the darkest mysteries themselves to the understanding, through the flowery avenue of the persuaded affections.

But of whatsoever efficacy may be the example, or however sorrowful the life of Christ, his offering of himself was unmixed pain and suffering; and by this suffering he perfected, and does ever make perfect, all true believers. "Now (says St. Paul) if we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, and not otherwise." And again—"But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Pet. v. 10.)

We do not mean that by suffering, it is here in-

tended that every sanctified Christian must necessarily suffer the outward and visible afflictions of this world; for it is quite plain that such a test of holiness would be at once fallacious and unscriptural. But the apostle points to that mortification of our members, that sorrow for sin, those painful struggles of the troubled spirit, the groans of creation waiting for the redemption of the body—all which believers encounter, and through whose gates they must pass ere they enter into eternal rest.

Then, to bear the image of the earthy, would import the trial by like sufferings, and, of consequence, that the way to perfection, through the offering of Christ, lies along the blood-stained ascent of Calvary, where the worshipper, sanctified in the blood of the Redeemer, descries the inscription upon the cross—"Christ made perfect by sufferings, and become the author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him." (Heb. v. 9.)

True that the persuaded believer treads the thorny highways of this probationary world, in much fearfulness. On every height which he surmounts, a voice meets him, exclaiming—"Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Terror and seduction practise alternate arts to lure him from his course; and failing breath, and feeble knees, yield, too often, to the hardships of the day, till, at length, Christ takes compassion on the wearied pilgrim, and, as he passes by, travelling in

the greatness of his strength, raises him from the dust, to sit with himself in the chariot of his triumph.

Yet more, as the chariot ascends to heavenly places, the departed Saviour lets fall his robes of righteousness upon the expectant faithful. Though dark and deep roll the gulph which separates between man and his God, smote by the seamless vesture, the waves divide, and the innumerable company, washed and sanctified in the waters of grace, pass over, and press to the promised Canaan.

It is then, through the perfect atonement of Jesus Christ, and not through their own works and deservings, that the sanctified are themselves made perfect. Through that full satisfaction which supplies their empty service—through the efficacy of that sacrifice by faith, in which their belief is counted unto them for righteousness—through all these ways, as through so many approaches united into one in Christ, leading to the one only gate of glory, the sanctified draw nigh unto God with full assurance of faith, assured that they will, by Christ, be perfected—abide in God's tabernacle—dwell in his holy will, and be received into everlasting happiness. "For Christ has prepared the mansions for the blessed; and Christ ever liveth to make intercession, and that intercession prevaileth, for he is able to save, to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him."

Happily, there are men to whom these convictions are of holy and abiding value. The sinner, oppressed with the burthen of guilt, and scarcely knowing how he shall cast it off; the heart seduced to evil, yet not all hardened; the conscience debased, and polluted by guilt, but still not utterly seared; the mind perverted indeed, and alienated from God, yet not utterly reprobate. To these the hope set before them rises as the towers of some city of refuge in the dim distance: perseverance and unrelaxing speed may even now, when the enemy and avenger pursues with closing strides, bring them within its gates.

It is a truly blessed state to be led by the Spirit of God, to consider our ways, and be wise. When one, who has long gone on in trespasses and sins, is suddenly arrested in his career of departure from God—when the written verity appears before his eyes, that God is too pure to behold iniquity—when the terrors of conscience pierce the soul, and the lightnings of God's judgments flash upon the view, to be told of a Saviour from the wrath to come, to learn the glad tidings of salvation brought nigh, to hear of the burthen of his guilt being borne by another, and the whole body of sin utterly abolished,—cold, indeed, and insensible must be the heart that feels no gratitude, no love, no joy.

Not so the holy men of old, who strung the harps of Sion to the praise of the God of their salvation.

They saw, by faith, afar off the blood of the covenant, as the waters of a mighty river, burst the opposing barriers of divine justice, and open a way to the footstool of eternal mercy : and by this way the ransomed of the Lord are invited to draw near, and behold with open face the King in his beauty—Jehovah well pleased—justice satisfied—the law magnified and made honourable—the great mysterious Sacrifice perfect, sufficient, efficacious. Thus, then, Christ, the Plant of Renown, rooted and grounded in this lower world, though once by the hands of wicked men cut down to the very earth, did again shoot upwards and prevail, and now it displays its foliage, even in the mid court of heaven, offering its leaves to heal the wounds of divine justice, and dropping from its dewy summit a holy and effectual balm over the sorrows and the sins of fallen man. . . Beneath its shadow the penitent is secure—secure as was the Israelite on the much-to-be-remembered night of Egypt, when the blood of the paschal lamb stood as an armed man at the door, and parried the blow of the destroying angel.

For the atonement has been complete, and the offering altogether perfect. The hand-writing that was against us has been nailed to his cross, and remembered in condemnation no more. Christ, being perfect, dwells with the Father, one in substance, power, and eternity—separate from sinners, and a fitting mediator.

Of these high things who shall aptly speak. They form the basis of a believer's praise, and the stay of his after practice. To be perfect, because he is perfect, will surely suggest a holy change of heart and life." "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light." (Eph. v. 8.) And men do so walk; for when God sheds abroad his love in our hearts, he makes, at the same time, discoveries of himself, and the mind receives impressions of his infinite goodness not easily obliterated. It becomes possessed with a desire to praise him, to make known his attributes to all the world, and to spread around convictions of his majesty, his goodness, and his power; and, like David, the perfect heart exclaims, "I delight to do thy will."

Such are they who, made perfect by the all-sufficient offering, apply to themselves, by faith, the benefits of the living intercession. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.... Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them. I in them and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John, xvii. 11, 12.) Thus the fragrant crown which flourishes upon the Saviour's brow in the regions of immortality lets fall full many a flower of sweetest

essence to decorate the believer's brow. Breathed on by the Spirit of love, unfolding its bloom under the genial influence of the Sun of Righteousness, and refreshed by the dew of divine grace, its accepted odours ascend to heaven. Yet more, it is promised to the believer made perfect by the blood of the everlasting covenant, that he also, as doth his Master, shall wear the crown.

He whom ye seek dwelleth in heaven with the Everlasting Father, a High Priest touched with our infirmities. In his days of our flesh, he became acquainted with what is in man. Now, in his days of glorified flesh, he abides man's advocate before God, to whom he has ascended, "far above all heavens." (Ephes. iv. 10.) Each office which he filled had its own peculiar sphere of usefulness in the great scheme of redemption.

His manhood pronounced, with all the efficacy of holy example, the power we, fallen creatures, possess through him, of being followers of righteousness. His godhead and manhood combined, led the way to heaven, where flourish its peaceful fruits, quietness and assurance for ever.

"Exalted to sit at the right hand of God, with all fulness of joy, glory, and power, over all things, both in heaven and earth, to gather and defend his church, subdue his enemies, and furnish his ministers and people with the manifold gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit."

He sitteth at the right hand of God, and rests the endless Sabbath; his throne the mercy-seat, the overshadowing cloud his canopy, the heaven itself his altar: his own body the accepted sacrifice, and the voice from the excellent glory still pronounces, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Brethren in Jesus, may an abiding sense of his perfect offering and full intercession direct, govern, and sanctify your hearts. May the memory of his dying love and risen care, mingle with each thought, and deed, and consciousness of being. So only shall we become partakers of his altar, or be perfected by his blood who is our peace.

A deep gulph does, indeed, roll between us and eternal happiness, but Christ walketh upon the waters, and leads the ransomed host in safety over.

Faith sees no danger, hope no difficulty, and love no fear. All cast their care on him who careth for them, and press forward to the prize, trusting in his assurance who exclaims, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Deut. xxxi. 6.)

SERMON IX.

HEBREWS, x. 19, 20, 21.

"Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

THE apostle addresses himself to believers, who know and appreciate the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

All men indeed, to whom the light of revelation, or the inductions of reason, have displayed an existence beyond the grave, invest it with the attributes of happiness or repose.

The constitution of this world seems to a reflecting mind so replete with perplexity, its enjoyments, in so far as they are peculiar to the present state of being, so few, so faint and fleeting, that it gladly

seeks refuge from doubt and trouble in the contemplation of another. Where inferences bearing upon a future state took their rise from the mere suggestions of intellect, or of philosophic speculation, it is manifest that no very satisfactory conclusions ensued. The soul elevated itself in idea far above this transitory world, and ranged through imaginary regions; some dedicated to tranquil happiness, some to active enjoyment; others to a continuance of the pursuits which constituted the pleasure, or even the constrained employments of the life it had left.

But the fancied scheme was all imperfect. Men peopled the land of shadows with the passions which defile the flesh; and lust, and jealousy, and hate, reigned among the disembodied spirits of the dead. . . . It is not denied, that there have been at every period, some men who, though devoid of the immediate aid of express revelation, have not failed to indicate a perception of unseen things so clear and holy as to denote a superior guidance of the contemplative faculties, when exercised upon eternal objects. Mankind have admired with justice the profoundness of their views, and offered the ready tribute of approbation to an observance of the proprieties and practice of the duties of life becoming the abstracted meditations of the sage. . . But yet the light that was in them was darkness. A cloudy atmosphere obscured the scene and mists, continually rising, misled the reasoner. No final, no

definite, no conclusive inference, was obtained; the argument seemed interminable, or if, for a moment, a building of apparent truth was erected upon a basis, where the territory was undisputed, it suffered so much disturbance from external forces, that its beauty was marred, or its solidity endangered by the shocks.

In fact history affords no example of a perfectly satisfied heathen, of one who, while he fully believed that his own scale preponderated, yet could honestly assert that its antagonist was without weight. Something was still wanting to complete, or to demonstrate the reveries of imagination, or to overthrow the conflicting views of rivals, unsettled as themselves; and men toiled vainly and unprofitably through a deepening gloom of disappointing theories.

From such a labyrinth as this, it was the happy province of Christianity to set us free. If in its mysteries there are many things hard to be understood, enough yet remains of what is intelligible and convincing to ordinary minds. If the terrors of judgment appal our hearts, the promises of gospel love cast out slavish fear. If God dwelleth in a light, no man can approach to, we have yet boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

The apostle deduces these arguments from premises laid down in the preceding chapter. He had there declared that—"Without shedding of blood

there is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22; and x. 4.) And that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins;" but the "offering of the body of Jesus Christ," who appeared with his own blood, in the presence of God for us, having purchased eternal redemption and remission," &c. And "Where remission of *sins* is, there is no more offering for sin"—no longer a barrier to the access of the believer into the holiest of all; the blood of Jesus has consecrated a new and living way, through which we are invited in the text to draw near, with full assurance of faith," for that blood hath taken away all sin, and cleansed faithful men, and perfected all sanctified men, whereof the Holy Ghost is witness. Hence, we are no more excluded by reason of the uneffaced stains of pollution, but may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

The apostle uses the term boldness not without meaning.

I cannot assent to the opinion adopted by many commentators, that he designs to convey merely the idea of a freedom, a liberty, a bare privilege or permission to enter in. If such were his object it had been better fulfilled by a term of less definite signification. But it seems probable that he wishes to impress on those to whom he writes, sentiments of most awful reverence for the place into which

the offering of Christ procured admission; and therefore uses a phrase of suitable import.

The term "boldness" occurs frequently throughout the New Testament, and almost always in the sense our translators ascribe to it in this passage, namely, a feeling of the mind in which, while a persuasion of the danger attaching to some certain enterprize, is not absent from it; yet, the fear of undertaking it, is overruled by a more powerful motive, or impulse.

Now, the mode of entering into the holy of holies of the Jewish sanctuary, has an apt similitude to the entrance proposed by the apostle, and may serve to illustrate his allusion. Into this, it is well known that the high priest, and he only, entered once a-year, not without blood; and none other than the high priest presumed to enter: for the awful Majesty of God guarded its precincts, and repressed the intrusions which curiosity or wantonness might suggest.

This was indeed but a worldly sanctuary, and pattern of the heavenly, into which Christ entered with his own blood.

Into the pattern sanctuary the high priest entered by the blood of bulls and goats. Into the heavenly sanctuary Jesus entered by his own. But at this point arises the great distinction. The high priest only entered in. He neither brought the

congregation with him, nor promised to bring them in; nor could he. His office consisted in making the atonement; and, (that being made,) in pronouncing the blessing upon the people, who never followed him into the holy of holies. Our high priest, on the other hand, does not confine himself to entering in alone, but brings many sons with him into glory.

The Jews had no need of boldness, for they could not expect to enter in but through the high priest, as their representative; but Christians have set before them, the promise of admission, every man in his own order, as "priests of God and of Christ." (Rev. xx. 6.) "Having boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." (Eph. iii. 12.)

By the term "holiest" it is clear that the apostle designates the immediate presence of God—that region where dwells in ineffable glory the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity; the light that no man can approach to; in whose effulgence the abased cherubim veil their faces. Thither hath no man yet attained; therefore, of its glories can no man tell. We know from the inspired word, that the grandeur of Jehovah rested upon the visible holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle; we know that a voice of dread command issued from the overshadowing cloud; and that fire went forth from the Lord, to consume the adversaries.

But concerning the holiest in heaven, of which the text treats, we know nothing. What class of men shall be excluded, is told us with perfect distinctness: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth; neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." (Rev. xxviii. 27.) But believers may have confidence, and boldness, and freedom to enter in; and a full trust in the means through which their entrance has become secure. The ark of the covenant, no longer fenced in by the divine denunciations, may be touched by whomsoever hath by faith obtained a share in the sacrifice of Christ—for the presence of God ceases to be formidable to such as are sanctified by the blood of his Son. But, does the apostle treat of present or future things? We answer, of both. Of future privileges, now realized by present faith; of boldness, that doth now possess the sanctuary; entering under the sanctifying influence of holy sprinkling.

Faith, in full reliance on him who is able to save to the uttermost, boldly approaches the gates of everlasting rest, demands and receives entrance, through that gracious Lord who is the way, and the truth, and the life.

It is, perhaps, not unprofitable to note, in this place, a singularity in the original language. Believers are said to enter, not by, or through, but *in* the blood of Jesus. Now this may, indeed, be no

more than an idiomatic expression; yet, we observe upon it, as conducting to conclusions of much interest.

Does the apostle mean thereby to intimate a union which believers, who are crucified unto the world, may have with their bleeding Master? Are they borne into the presence of God upon that crimson stream, shed for the remission of sins?

They do not, indeed, become, themselves, participators, or identified with the blood of sprinkling, as though they belonged to the sacrifice; yet are they partakers of the divine nature and fellow-workers with God.

This, however, is asserted by the apostle, that the privilege of entering into the holiest is *now* vouchsafed us; for he treats of present matters, and declares, that they who were afar off, are *now* brought near by the blood of Christ; and, on them who sat in darkness hath a great light shone. If not yet personally united, according to the mysterious assurance which Christ graciously vouchsafed to his disciples, we are still permitted to enter in with him, by our prayers and supplications, made acceptable through the Spirit of his love.

And this Spirit of love bestows glimpses of the glory that shall be revealed, which the believer shall behold and not another.

Brethren, you will, no doubt, regard these promises as deeply valuable, and well calculated to

awaken your earnest hopes, and stimulate your every effort. Their realization in the mind, removes, as it were, the burthen of the flesh; or, while still it must be borne, raises the soul to the contemplation of heavenly things, and draws its delights from the pure fountains whose sources are above.

Our next inquiry relates to the nature and character of the way through which we enter. The apostle describes it as new, living, and consecrated.

It is, in all truth, a new way; now first trodden, now first made passable, now first notified to the whole world. The eye of faith did, indeed, descry this way afar off; for faith saw him, who was himself "the way, and the truth, and the life." And the pilgrims who by faith walked upon that way, refreshed their fainting spirits, as they journeyed, from the well-spring of life, for they drank of that rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.

But for the world, the lost, the lukewarm, the blinded world; the world which knew not God, neither was he in all their thoughts; in vain the messenger prepared the way, and smoothed its ruggedness; they disdained to walk on it. In vain the waters of grace flowed from the exhaustless rock; men felt no thirst, and therefore came not to Christ to drink. The streams of blessedness did, indeed, burst from beneath the portals of the temple, but they poured their currents in vain.

Abana and Pharphar received the preference from the carnal multitude, who deemed them better than all the waters of Israel. And this new way, till then untrodden by man—this narrow way, which leadeth unto salvation, was the New Testament in Christ's blood.

Many ways had been tried. The law had its way, but could never make the comers thereunto perfect. The pride of man had its way, but man by pride fell. And the systems of philosophy had their way; but "the world by wisdom knew not God." Even folly, caprice, fancy, and every passion, and every whim, in turn had their way; but all were devious and delusive. Some seduced the traveller without an object, and terminated abruptly. Others, after many windings, returned to the spot from whence they had set out. Others, more erring, attracted the wanderer's footsteps along the flowery mead, or smiling border, till he unexpectedly found himself mingled with the multitude that throng the highway of destruction.

But a new way was revealed; rugged, indeed, and thorny to the foot of pride, but smooth to those whose feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Our first parents saw it as they were expelled Eden; and Abel walked and died on it; and Noah trod it before the flood, and discovered its traces when the waters had subsided; and Abraham pursued its course from Ur of the

Chaldees; and Jacob found it on his lonely journey; and Moses stood upon it; and the waters of the Red Sea retired to disclose it; and the sands of the desert were blown aside to reveal its track; and the streams of Jordan could not cover it; and all the prophets journeyed along it, and the wise men passed over it, till at length they reached its seeming termination; for the star which lit the travellers stood still.

But not for long did its course lie concealed; for the Sun of Righteousness arose, and shone upon the world; and the Redeemer of mankind pointed out the way, and that way was himself; and he, the way, was seen in the city and the waste; on the desert mountains, and through the lonely valley; on the rock of proud Capernaum, and on the waters of Tiberias' stormy sea. Jerusalem saw it strewed with flowers. On Calvary it was stained with blood. The silent sepulchre of the dead, and the departed spirits beheld it; and the great stone was rolled away to give it free space; and it stretched far from the gloomy depths of the nethermost earth, and rose again to the surface, and soared in the air, when the men of Galilee gazed on it, as the clouds opened to receive it. And the sons of the resurrection, the ransomed of the Lord, will surely follow its guidance, nor faint, nor fail, till they attain to those regions of immortality and happiness, whither, from the foundation of the

world, its course hath led, and gather of the fruits of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

This is the way spoken of by the apostle in the text; the old way become new in Christ. A living way, for Christ ever liveth, and he is the way. An everlasting way, likewise, on which the whole world is invited to move.

Perhaps, also, we may extend the term living way beyond the appellation which our Saviour bestowed on himself when he asserted that he was the way, and the truth, and the life; and look upon it, also, as an actively living way, quickening whom it will. For, as the way itself cannot perish, neither can those who walk upon it. The flood cannot tear it up, nor the sandy whirlwinds cover it; it abideth for ever, distinct and visible to all who will use it. The wearied pilgrim finds himself, while he journeys along, quickened and enlivened by it; the living waters cool his brow, and heavenly breezes invigorate his frame.

And here a question arises: since this is the way, can all men use it, and walk in it? We answer, the faithful have already done so; therefore, the faithful may do so still. It is no valid argument against using it, that other ways have been preferred, even by the wise and powerful. Religious truth is, no doubt, much commended to our acceptance and conviction, by the respect we entertain

for those who embrace it; and even error too often borrows the sanction of authority, and conceals its defects under the shadow of a lofty name. But when St. Paul expressly cautions his fellow-Christians, that "though he, or an angel from heaven, should preach another gospel," not only must the new doctrine be rejected, but the introducers thereof "accursed." (Gal. i. 8.) And when the same apostle warns us against following a multitude to do evil, all pretext seems taken away for measuring our own rule of conduct by the standard of other men's practice or persuasions. I do not aver, that this independence of the judgment may consist in an absolute deliverance from all restrictions; and that, consequently, the opinions and counsel of our brethren are unworthy of consideration: this would tend to dissolve the amity of Christian fellowship, and snap asunder the triple cord of the Saviour's love. On the contrary, I firmly believe, that the higher grades of piety and faith, are seldom or ever arrived at by solitary effort; and that God has granted to the pure feelings of the mind and heart, (if, indeed, any deserve the name,) the sublime exaltation of which they are susceptible, chiefly upon the terms of being communicated from man to man.

Christ marked his sentiments on this point by sending his disciples two and two; desirous, as it would seem, that the social virtues might be exhi-

bited to the world by his messengers: and, indeed, the whole tenor of his gospel advocates the maintenance of mutual love, and of that to which this digression more especially has reference—mutual communion. But our inquiry is, shortly, whether we should believe God rather than man—and it appears to me to be very easily decided.

If, then, men willingly contemn the offered way, they act at the peril of their souls. If they will do despite to the Spirit of grace, and count the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing, we can but mourn over the delusion which despises mercy and blessing. But, let us, my brethren, consider how this new way was consecrated to its holy purpose. Among the ancient heathen nations it was customary to consecrate the ways to their temples, by lustrations, which the priests performed, and to bestow upon them a sacred character and name. Christ, our high priest, consecrated the way which he made for us, by the sprinkling of his own blood, precious the more, as the way itself was more honorable; and more to be regarded with veneration and awe, as leading to a heavenly tabernacle and sanctuary.

And every nation, tribe, and kindred are invited to enter in by it; and might enter in if they would. Yet, it is very narrow; for men have, themselves, pared away its proper breadth and dimensions.

As though God were a cruel and capricious

tyrant, they refuse to part with their own possessions, or yield but a portion of the vineyard they delight in, to make straight the highway of the Lord of Hosts.

During the reign of the Jewish law, a curtain, or vail, spread or let fall before the holiest, concealed its mysteries from the prying gaze of the curious. The high priest, himself a trembling sinner, did, once a-year, pass within the reverenced enclosure. The people saw none of the holy patterns of heavenly things contained in its secret recesses. But, in the fulness of time, the Saviour of mankind was put to death upon the cross, and by wicked men mocked and smitten; and the same spear which pierced his side, rent in twain the perishable vail of the temple, and displayed its glories as well to the bold and insulting enemy, as to the convinced and constant believer. We are informed by the Evangelist that this event occurred at the period of evening sacrifice, consequently, the assembled congregation were enabled to see the holy of holies, effulgent in those mysteries which had been for ages hid from their eyes. True, that the temple service was soon afterwards abolished, and altars ceased to glow, and prayer to be made within her walls; but before these changes were matured, the precious doctrine, set forth in the text, was imparted to the world. To the whole world was opened the new, and living, and consecrated way,

through the vail, that is to say, the flesh of Christ. For, as the vail of the Jewish temple concealed the divine symbols from the gaze of the people, so did the flesh of Christ draw its funeral pall over his divinity. Men were unable to discern that God could dwell within the tabernacle of a human body. They derided the imaginary God-head—for imaginary they deemed it. To them the doctrine of the cross was foolishness—its publicity a scandal—its tortures shame—its offering but a condemned sinner—its atonement a stumblingblock, over which they fell.

Through this vail issued the two emblems of the Saviour's office, and the signs of his grace—the purifying water—the atoning blood—baptism of the heart with Christ into his death, and the life-stream of that sacrifice which cleanseth from all sin—the seal of an everlasting covenant—the pledge of full redemption. By one, men enter into the conditions on which he gathers and calls his church; by the other, believers become mystically united with himself. Hence, saith the Saviour, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." And as the vail of the flesh was pierced, so a way was made through it, as through the gates of heaven, to all believers; "for Christ was the door, and no man cometh to the Father but by him." Now this way, which was new and living, derived its consecration from the holy blood-shedding of him who gave his life as a ransom

for many. The purple stream of the slaughtered Son of God doth indeed cry from the earth for vengeance upon the murderers, but it pleads their pardon in heaven. It is then through faith in the suffering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the flesh, really and substantially God and man, that the new and living way is laid open to us. For if we will not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and was put to death in the flesh, how shall we in our own flesh expect the benefit of his blood-shedding. And if we deny that the vail of his flesh was rent, where shall we seek a symbol of the rending of that vail which separates between us and our God? . . . . . But blessed be the Father of mercies, we have received these truths at the disposition of angels, and have surely kept them. We know that the Son of man is also Son of the living God, and stagger not at the promises, for he is faithful that promised; nor yet are we left to enter into the holiest, unaided, unwelcomed, and alone, however certain our admission, and grounded our confidence. For one is before us to prepare the many mansions, spreading wide the arms of mercy, and reaching forth his gracious hand to draw the wearied votary into the ark of his rest.

Brethren, Christ your High Priest tabernacles there, "set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens," a minister of the sanctuary which the Lord pitched, and not man. Since, then,

our High Priest presides over the holiest, whither he hath invited all creation, "let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," to offer spiritual sacrifices accepted to God through Jesus Christ.

The doors of the house are open; the call is given to them that are afar off, to be made nigh by the blood of Jesus.

But who shall stand upon such holy ground? even "he that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." (Psalm xv. 2.) And he who is himself the truth will make true our hearts, and he who is faithful will confirm our faith, and he who shed the blood of sprinkling will sprinkle our hearts from an evil conscience, and he who was baptized in chosen Jordan will wash away the pollutions of our unclean bodies in the purifying waters of blessed and effectual regeneration.

And yet, brethren, notwithstanding all these bright and animating assurances, the subject of our drawing near to God is one of unutterable awfulness. Moses felt this awe of the soul when the voice of the Lord spake unto him from the midst of the burning bush, and he hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God; and he trembled exceedingly when the fearful presence of Jehovah and his mighty thunderings shook Sinai to its base. Then how may we dare, ungifted with the spirit of Moses, and untaught in his wisdom, how may we dare to draw near to

God. We gladly dwell upon his infinite mercies, for they console our affrighted hearts ; and even his wisdom, power, and holiness do at times pass before us, and we gaze on his perfections and his glory ; but, unhappily, they are generally surveyed at so great a distance, that their image is seldom impressed distinctly upon the mind.

In the long space which separates us from our heavenly Father, many rays of the divine light are lost, being absorbed or diverted from their course by the dense atmosphere that encircles the world. And the voice from above reaches our ears so mingled with the confused clamours of our fellow-mortals, that we scarce can distinguish the words of God from the words of man—or the truth as it is in Jesus from the foolish talk and jesting condemned by the apostle.

And why this confounding of things, that can have no fellowship? Why is the bread of life leavened with wickedness and malice? Simply because we are too apt to live without God in the world, neither is God in all our thoughts. The world, we feel, is near, and alas! often too dear to us ; but God, to our blinded eyes, seems afar off ; his ways are not as our ways, therefore we will not walk in them ; his judgments are far above out of our sight, and therefore we do not fear them. . . Hence the world engrosses all our solicitudes. God is indeed discerned as men behold a bright star in

the firmament. They admire perhaps its brilliancy—perhaps pursue its motions under the guidance of science—perhaps acknowledge their obligation for the light it sheds, or seek to ascertain its magnitude and importance in the celestial system; but they feel no personal interest about it; they are far from making it the object of their love, and are entirely unaffected by any desire to approach it, or to dwell in it. . . . And yet, death will annihilate this mighty distance, and judgment bring them into a certain and very formidable collision with the object now so remote. But why do we deem these spheres remote, when their light, and of one the heat, reach us? Does not the influence they possess give evidence that we are not beyond their controlling power? And so is it of God. We may picture to our imagination, the condensation, as it were, of his essence dwelling in some fixed abode; but his influence passes over the fancied limit of his presence, and invigorates, while it illumines, the world. Too late, men may desire they had sought communion with their Maker—too unavailingly, regret that alienation of heart which made them look upon him with the eye of a stranger.

It is a sad reflection that so few take heed to the admonition of the apostle—that so many refuse to draw near to God; or, if they do draw near, or desire to draw near, hope to do so, not by the living way, but by paths which mislead, or works which

are dead. But the holiest becomes accessible through the blood of Jesus. The vail is rent asunder—all men may enter in ; the new and living way is consecrated by his sufferings, who is our peace, and he himself reigns for ever a high priest over the house of God.

Happy is he whose persuaded mind enables him to accept the invitation, and draw near. His soul shall dwell at ease, rejoicing in those inconceivable blessings which God hath prepared for them that love him, and obey his laws.

Scripture is express upon the means requisite to point to and preserve us in the way ; that means is faith. By faith we can draw near the altar of our justification. Faith will indeed be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of the holiest as yet unseen ; and faith, grown up and matured to full assurance, will tread with boldness the appointed way ; for faith hath purified the heart, and, working by the influence of love, hath cast out fear.

Nor does the word of life prescribe a limit to our approaches, or mark out a boundary beyond which we may not pass. While we circle round the Sun of Righteousness, and are kept within the government of its holy attraction, another force, the law of our sinful nature, is constantly operating and impelling us from the centre ; but this force, once overcome, we are instantly drawn into it by the power of its attraction, and absorbed in its beams. They

may draw near who have taken hold of the Covenant, and whose hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience, confessing their sins—confessing a full dependence on God's mercy through Christ, and a steadfast resolution "to live unto him who died for them."

Yes, friends; believers may advance, with boldness, into the precincts; but remember, there must be no distrust, no faltering, no wavering of an inconstant mind—no questioning of the convictions, whether without faith it is possible to please God, or, with it, possible to fail. The causeway which traverses the sea of time is high, narrow, slippery. Stormy winds threaten to blow the traveller away, and raging billows dash aloft their foam to darken the misty air. One false step, one unauthorized step to the right hand or to the left, and he falls into the abyss of perdition which yawns gloomily below.

Let the heart be pure—let the flesh be sanctified—let the conscience be sprinkled—let the understanding be convinced, and the terms accepted of as proffered by the Saviour.

And who doubts of the Saviour's ability to fulfil his covenant? None, I am quite persuaded, whom I now address. But perhaps you scruple at the terms, the pure heart, the sanctified flesh, the sprinkled conscience. These are qualities of loftiest bearing; but are not the objects they aspire to also lofty? . . The eagle eye that gazes on the sun is trained by

early discipline to endure its beams. The wing that soars above the clouds, first spreads its timid plumage at an elevation scarce removed from earth. All is in beginning. We know that we cannot bring down heaven to the level of the world; then, what remains but to leave the world, and raise ourselves to heaven—and Christ is there, to welcome us to its everlasting rest—Christ is there, sitting on the mercy-seat—Christ is there; he points to the new and living way—Christ is there, our high priest, over the house of God. He bids you boldly enter in—his blood guarantees your title to do so. If you have faith in that blood, the call will not be made in vain.

SERMON X.

HEB. xii. 25.

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

WHEN the voice from the Excellent Glory pronounced Jesus to be the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased, no doubt the bystanders felt the force of this awful appeal to their own convictions, and confessed in their hearts that God had set his seal to the mission of Christ. Yet it is, perhaps, questionable how far we may be qualified to appreciate the impressiveness of such a scene.

Time, and the altered circumstances of the world, conspire to draw a cloud over many of the prodigies recorded in Holy Writ; and deprive us of the means of clearly discerning the effect they probably produced. We are disposed to regard the

Jewish nation as so much marked out for the peculiar people of God, that miracles were their proper domain. And truly, the scantiness of our information on all points connected with their history and manners, except those more immediately blended with the ecclesiastical polity of the state, tend materially to strengthen this impression.

Their theocracy being based upon an abiding miracle, and on the frequent manifestations of supernatural power by Jehovah and his prophets, furnish, also, additional grounds for considering every thing relating to this people in a strange and exclusive aspect. Hence, it is confessedly of extreme difficulty to identify ourselves, in feeling and sentiment, or in popular prejudices, with a nation so very different from its fellows.

With the social habits of the polite states of Greece and Italy, we have considerable acquaintance. Their writers have left copious records to instruct and interest, which place before us, as in a mirror, as well the occurrences of common life, and the reflections of ordinary men upon ordinary events, as the exploits of the hero, or the meditations of the sage. The natural result of such minute domestic details is, as we might expect, that we experience no impediment in transporting ourselves, in imagination, back to the periods they describe. We become inmates of the retreat of the philosopher, or, enrolled amongst the citizens of

imperial Rome, the associates of her statesmen, and participators in her policy. Or, what still more operates upon the attaining to a distinct conception of these remote epochs, the skill, or it may be, the simplicity of the author introduces us, as guests, to the table and the hearth. We find ourselves insensibly one of some family, for whose welfare and reputation we feel anxious, and of whose wrongs and insults we are profoundly sensible. Thence it follows, that we not only comprehend with facility the whole motives which guided the conduct of men in either public or private affairs, but we even become their imitators, where the transactions bear the stamp of real or supposed similitude to our own times. Thus, our ears are quite accustomed to hear of a modern Solon, or Macænas, or Atticus; or of a Themistocles, a Fabius, a Cæsar.

But, with very few exceptions, we know nothing of the households of the Jews, or of their habits of daily social intercourse; of their interchange of visits; the tenor of their ordinary conversation, their epistolary correspondence, and the philosophic sentiments and opinions of individuals. In short, we have been but sparingly admitted within the domestic circle, and remain in a proportionate ignorance of many of their leading features and characteristics. The minor traits, and to these the springs of action may, for the most part, be traced, have not found place in the sketches of the sacred

penmen, nor are we acquainted with them from other sources.

I do not mean, that traits of character, as of parental, or filial affection, are neglected, or instances of the devotedness of friendship, or self-denial, or patriotism. All, indeed, that is virtuous, or of elevated mind, all of the soul that is noble, or of the heart that is warm—all that wisdom, piety, and love may own, appear in the pages of the inspired volume, dressed in whatsoever is beautiful in language, or convincing from truth. God forbid, that I should deny to the word of life its just preeminence, in reproof, correction, righteousness.

Where, if not within the volume of that book, shall we seek for the bright example of requited probity, and the awful beacon lights of punished guilt. We need no other monitor to choose the good and reject the evil; no other history to point out instances, where not alone the individual transgressor sunk under God's judgments, but delinquent nations perished by the stroke.

It were well that we profited as we might, from the familiar details, however scanty, into which her prophets and historians have entered, and acquainted ourselves more than I fear we do, with the daily habits, the practices, and manners of that most interesting people. We should, at least, derive no uninstructive demonstrations of the effect which their religious institutions produced upon general

habits and customs. Inferences might, possibly, be drawn, illustrative of the benefits or evils likely to arise from a closer conformity or avoidance, on our part. As far is it from my design to depreciate the Holy Scriptures (if, haply, my view be warranted) for defectiveness in these respects. Possibly, a more close observation of national, or, I should say, of family and personal manners, might detract from the reverence with which we peruse their annals, or weaken the force of example, whether to imitate or shun.

My charge is against the readers; and no utterance is given—no vain and presumptuous thought has ever arisen in my mind, derogatory to the imperishable preciousness of the history which relates God's dealings with his creatures.

Thus guarded, I may be permitted to hold the opinion, that few students of the sacred records, compared with the readers of other ancient histories, or with themselves, if so occupied, make the events described pass in their thoughts as though they were themselves spectators; and still fewer, who so identify their own sentiments and conduct with those of the persons named as actors or sufferers, as to form a correct estimate of the force of circumstances, or the origin of motives.

I esteem this a great evil, and calculated to obscure, in no unimportant measure, the rays of divine instruction. And I would earnestly exhort you,

my brethren, in your future investigation of the Book of God, to aim at that minuteness of apprehension which many among you bestow on less deserving studies.

That the practice would well repay the labor, I cannot question, both by the increased interest it would not fail to awaken, and the manifest advance of knowledge which must ensue.

These reflections have presented themselves to me from some consideration of the text chosen for this day's discourse; for the subject seems one, which must have peculiarly awakened, in the recollections of a Jew, the divers instances of God's supernatural intervention with his nation, and consequently demands of us an appropriation, as it were, to ourselves, of the facts adverted to.

The passage before us constitutes the moral, or conclusion of a series of statements unsurpassed in sublimity and wonder by the brightest labours of their inspired author. Our minds are, indeed, almost bewildered by the sudden transition which St. Paul makes, from the "blackness, and darkness, and tempest," which rolled around the summits of Sinai, and let fall their gloomy terrors, even to her base, to the mild and placid atmosphere of peace and gospel love.

Who shall, in imagination, contemplate the assembled multitude, bending their alarmed gaze

upon this prodigy of appalling aspect, which none amongst them dared approach? Even the mute beast, which unconsciously touched the mountain, was stoned to death; and Moses himself, disciplined in sights of awe, exclaimed, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

But this dispensation of blood and terror had passed away; for the gentle breathings of the Spirit of Jesus dispelled the vapours which had impressed a character of fearfulness upon God's dealings.

Sion took its place in the new covenant, as speaks the apostle. "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." (Heb. xii. 22.) See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Then let us now inquire—and may God, rich in mercy, pour the light of his countenance upon our endeavour.

Who is he that spake on earth—who speaks from heaven—and what are the consequences of refusing to hear?

A reference to the book of Exodus will at once inform us, who it was that primarily addressed God's people.

We learn in the 19th chapter, that Moses was employed of God as ambassador between him and the people of Israel, and ordained to bear the message of the divine commands, and return with the assurance of their obedience. The journeying host had arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, and halted according to the precept. "Israel encamped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." (Exod. xix. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.) We are here introduced to a scene as solemn and sublime as any which the Scriptures have recorded for our instruction. Human contemplation can discover none more striking to fix on in

this lower world, unless we except the closing incidents of our Saviour's sojourn.

The narrative describes the circumstances belonging to that surprising period when the code of laws, destined thenceforth to guide and govern God's chosen people, was promulgated with inconceivable majesty and wonder.

Then was the covenant made and accepted—then were given the promises unto our Fathers, and the oracles and the sanctuary established and set up. God pledged his truth, and sware by himself, (for he could find nothing greater,) to cherish and defend his own, if so be that they would obey his voice, and keep his covenant; and the people on their part answered and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." (Exod. xix. 8.)

How ill these assurances were observed, the sacred writings do not leave us long in suspense. This stubborn generation soon fell away from all its protestations of allegiance: neither gratitude for mercies and deliverances past, nor even the awe-inspiring demonstrations of present protection, stayed for a moment the wide-spreading leprosy of sin. Idolatry waved her debasing wand, and quickly usurped the throne whither pure homage was wont to pay its vows to a pure object; and vice, and murmurings, and distrust, and discontent defiled, alienated, and disturbed the congregation. Yet

Moses spake of mighty marvels, such as, we might imagine, would well have ensured a favorable reception to the doctrines he advocated; and he further supported the divine authority of his mission by the exhibition of the most stupendous miracles. But neither the marvellous evidence of the heavenly glory, nor the testimony given to the eternal wisdom, prevailed over the corruptions of Israel.

The first impressions were, as we learn, extremely vivid; for when "the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exod. xx. 18, 19.)

Alas, brethren, the change from these resolutions was indeed deplorably sudden. Not yet had forty days elapsed till the congregation became impatient at the absence of their leader. All that they had seen, or heard, or promised, were alike forgotten; and as their trust in the invisible superintendence of Jehovah was not sufficiently strong to satisfy their ideas of divine manifestations, they required a head, which their carnal eyes might behold; hence sprung their idolatry. We can have no difficulty in picturing to our minds what happy anticipations Moses may have formed, when his abstinence and labours in the mount were terminated. We behold him hastening to discharge the pleasing office of announcing God's

promises to his people, and we partake of his zeal to rear the tabernacle.

But these fond hopes were quickly extinguished by the sins of the idolatrous host, from which not even Aaron himself was exempt; and with a wounded spirit, and a soul pierced by sorrow, this chosen instrument of the divine will surveyed the blight which had withered the whitening harvest, and frustrated the ingathering of the ripe grain.

The impression which this spectacle made upon the mind of the prophet is not left to be guessed at. "He cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount; and he took the calf which they had made and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." (Exod. xxxii. 19.) And if this draught was deeply humiliating to this rebellious people, who shall describe the bitterness of that cup of fury which their sins have since compelled them to endure? "Desolation, such as never hath been since the world began, no, no, nor never shall be." Such are the words by which the Redeemer of mankind depicts the destiny of those men by whose wicked hands he was crucified and slain. But miseries of every kind had overtaken them long before his coming; and famines, and slavery, and plagues, and wars, and sieges, and subjugation, and captivity attested, through the progress of their history, the truth of

the apostle's observation, that "they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth."

We now arrive at the consideration of a dispensation, in some respects less imposing than the former—in all more glorious. In the first, God spake unto our fathers by the prophets. In the second, he hath spoken to us by his Son. The first was the ministration of condemnation—the second the ministration of life. The first gave the promises of time, the second of eternity. In the first men received the law by the disposition of angels. In the second the gospel was spoken by the Son. And "if," says St. Paul, "the first was sure and steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation," (Heb. ii. 2, 3,) as is contained in the holier compact of the second. Now, this salvation is promised us by Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, who speaketh from heaven. Christ had indeed spoken on earth, no less by precept and command, than by the evidence of frequent miracles, and the example of a blameless life; but he spoke then as a prophet, as a teacher, as a friend to the wandering sinner. He now speaks from heaven, where only has been fully ratified the new covenant in Christ's blood. Moses was indeed a type of Christ, and in that capacity led the people forth from bondage, and "gave them commandments which if a man keep he shall even

live in them," but the typical similitude stopped short at a very important point, for "Christ brings many sons with him into glory;" while Moses, weak in the flesh, did indeed descry from afar the land of inheritance, and pointed out the path of obedience through which it should be reached, but did not, for he could not, lead the way. Into the earthly type of the heavenly Canaan it was not permitted him to enter. God spake through Moses, from earth; the captain of our salvation speaketh from heaven; see that ye refuse him not. Many are the ways by which God appeals to our hearts—ways apparently adapted to their multiform character. To some he appeals through his Son, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and leading them through the vale of misery, and refining them in the furnace of affliction, would purify a people peculiar to himself. To others he speaks by mercies and deliverances which his grace enables them to distinguish. When human hopes have fled from the heart, and despair, as a triumphant foe, spurns the abandoned field, Christ, as sent from God, appears on their side, and turns the tide of battle.

He speaks to others by the voice of conscience—by that peace of mind which he only can bestow—by manifestations of himself—by revealing to believers his nature, his office, and his will.

To all men he addresses himself in the gospel of Jesus; for that is the visible and perpetual demon-

stration of his grace; and "the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." (Titus, ii. 11, 12.)

The voice which, on Sinai, once shook the earth, once more uttered, will shake the heavens. Law and gospel will repeat its echoes. It speaketh from heaven through Christ, who there dwells in glory everlasting, on the right hand of God.

We are too little acquainted with the aspect of the heavenly country, to attempt a description, or even to form a conception of its scenery. St. Paul has given an impressive warning to such as would essay to convey, in human language, an idea of the celestial home.

Whatsoever it be, or whatsoever it resemble; whether captivating to our finite senses by its exterior and visible beauty of holiness—peopled with beings with whom we, in the flesh, might hold converse—or the abode of disembodied spirits, undiscernible by our present faculties; this we know very imperfectly, but we know that God is there, in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and Christ is there, our mediator and high priest; and the Holy Ghost is there, making intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered; and cherubim and seraphim are there, and angels that kept their first estate are there, a heavenly host, whose

songs are tuned, to chant the ceaseless praise of God.

All tears are wiped away from all eyes, and all sorrows cease; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, relieveth every want, and there are pleasures for evermore laid up for believers, and an everlasting rest, and a continuing city.

From these regions of peace and joy, with this cloud of witnesses around, the voice speaketh—"See that ye refuse it not. It speaketh of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, with no uncertain sound; but it likewise entreats mercy from God, on behalf of sinners—it invokes no vengeance—it demands no retribution; one prayer alone is heard—Father forgive them.

Again, it speaketh to sinners likewise; and in the name, and with the authority of God, pronounces free pardon for all their sins, speaks of peace to their souls, and of offences for ever blotted out; if it convince the sinner of sin, it assures him of reconciliation; if it humble him to the dust of the earth, as a fallen creature, it exalts him, in his renewed nature, to sit together with Christ in heavenly places.

Nor yet is it an uncertain voice that speaks. It needs no more, that prophets and holy men should inquire diligently after the coming grace, nor "search what, and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it

testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Pet. i. 11.) For these things are ministered unto us, and now reported unto you; therefore the apostle saith, the gospel being preached unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—"Be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 13.) Nor yet is it a solitary voice, bursting unexpectedly, and but once through the lonely stillness of the universe. The voice was heard from heaven, when Christ fulfilling the law for righteousness, submitted himself to the sanctifying rite of baptism, and again it proceeded from the Excellent Glory—"This is my beloved Son, hear him."

Thus Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, speak from heaven, their high behests to fallen man—in all the grandeur of sounds that shake the heavens—in all the truth that confirms the testimony of the triune God.

What shall we say more, than reiterate the admonition of the apostle—"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh."

If there be many modes in which the call is made to the sinner, so too are there many ways taken to evade it. The term refuse is found in several places of the New Testament, generally in the sense ascribed to it in the text—namely, to reject;

for example, St. Paul addressing Timothy says—"Refuse (or reject) profane and old wives' fables," (1 Tim. iv. 7.) And again, "Foolish and unlearned questions, avoid, (or refuse to entertain,) knowing that they do engender strifes." (2 Tim. ii. 23.) And to Titus, "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." (Tit. iii. 10.) But it is needless to multiply instances in support of the critical meaning of the phrase adopted by the apostle in the text, the consciences of most men cannot fail to furnish them with a ready interpretation of its full import.

All reflecting persons must be sufficiently aware of their own unwillingness to receive the doctrines of Christianity, as sole guide of practice, to marvel at the phrase. The easy yoke and light burden, sit heavily upon hearts, which the strength of God has not confirmed.

Men for the most part, do not refuse assent to gospel truths, at least so far as they relate to the life and sufferings of our blessed Lord. Nor is the number, probably, very considerable of those who deny, even in thought, (though their conceptions on the point may not be very clear,) his atoning sacrifice and mediation—but a countless multitude give evidence that their conduct is not framed after its maxims, nor their minds experienced in its influence. And yet, all such persons do verily and indeed refuse him that speaketh.

When Christ saith, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matt. xi. 28,) "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," (John, vi. 37,) and men will not come unto him, that they might have life, what is this but to refuse him that speaketh? If Christ would come to them on their own terms; if he would lay aside the doctrines of self-denial and self-abasement; if he would cease to require a renunciation of all self-righteousness, and a confession of utter depravity; in short, if he would be Christ without his holiness, and Jesus without his cross; the friend of sinners, but not the reprover of sin; the Saviour of the world, without a covenant; he might be received in every house—might meet with willing converts, and delighted auditors.

But for Christ, and his poverty, and his mortifications, and his patience, and his cross—men have neither hearts, nor eyes, nor ears.

Hearts indeed they have, but gross with carnal lusts, and eyes blinded by the god of this world, and ears deaf to every holy call. The dew of the heavenly grace has been vainly shed, upon the barren surface of the soul; no growth in goodness attests the value of the unmerited gift—not a sparkling gem rests upon herb or flower, to tell of the free favor and love, which descended from on high; not a bud germinating in unwonted freshness, declares that the Spirit of God has breathed upon the place;

but rank weeds grow apace, and noxious plants unfolds their deadly shade, a covert to the evil propensities of the natural man.

Alas, friends, the human heart is too often an unpropitious field, and such as that field is, such is the world. The whole world, now lying in wickedness, overgrown with weeds, and wild; was once planted, a noble vine, wholly a right seed—fenced in by the hand of the Creator—watered and cultivated by the eternal husbandman—man has neglected the vineyard, and for grapes the Lord findeth wild grapes. When we arraign ourselves with a contempt of admonition, as intimated by the apostle in the text, I fear we do not duly consider who the speaker referred to is, from whence he speaks, or what he speaks of, for if we bestowed the deserved attention on these points, it is quite impossible that we should refuse to hear him. Duty, gratitude, interest, future happiness, and present peace, would plead for the speaker. My friends, evil befals the hour in which ye would turn away. To no earthly honor are ye called, but to a heavenly inheritance—with no chaplet of withering leaves will the judge of the race ye have with patience ran, decorate the victor's brow. He twines around it the unfading crown of immortal blessedness.

Know ye not whereunto ye are called; the sound is gone out into all lands, the words unto the end of the world; ye are called from darkness unto

marvellous light, from the shadow of death, unto the glorious sunbeams of eternal life ; from the warfare of the Spirit to the peace of God—from ignorance to knowledge, from misery to happiness, from sin to virtue, from doubt to full certainty. But if the call be vain, and men prefer darkness to light, and death to life, and war to peace, and ignorance and misery, and sin and doubt, to knowledge, happiness, virtue, and assurance, what then remains but that fearful looking out for judgment described by the apostle, and terrors the more poignant, because of our own free choice?

I say free—in that God has left his creatures to choose the good, and reject the evil. And I am persuaded, few persons who think at all, can deny their consciousness of this liberty.

We put to our minds much more frequently than perhaps we are disposed to admit, this solemn option, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

It is undeniable, that in our intercourse with the world, we make very little allowance for the force which temptation may have exerted over men, to persuade or compel them to evil actions.

When its influence is taken into account, in extenuation of a crime, we still set ourselves up as arbiters of the mode in which only we shall allow of its application. For example, we say that the rich man has no temptation to steal, or the prosperous

man no excuse for discontent, and indeed there might, if time served, be enumerated a distinct class of offences against what the world styles the laws of honor; conventionally exempted from the necessity of pleading apology, in palliation of their commission.

And yet shall we, seeing so imperfectly as we do, and so little capable, even if we did see distinctly, of combining or of comparing all the circumstances attendant upon any action, shall we limit the power of Satan, to such a narrow compass as our fancy would describe; or in plainer sense, esteem his arms invincible on some, and easily routed on other fields. But we cannot now dwell on this topic—we readily condemn the Jews, for having resisted the gospel, and yet daily resist it ourselves. Yet, thus speaks the apostle, "Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God, leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. ii. 3, 4.)

And shall we despise this leading, and close our ears upon that voice which speaketh from heaven?

God, no doubt, is tender and merciful to the creatures he has made, and remembers that we are but dust; and the intercession of one high priest, ever pleads for forgiveness; but yet, it is a fearful sub-

ject of contemplation, and a weighing in the balance we cannot look upon without alarm. In one scale the neglect of warnings, in the other the hopes of pardon.

We could find excuse for the inadvertence or ignorance of a person who, fleeing to a city of refuge, mistook the way; but none whatever, if arrived at its gates, he loitered without them till the avenger of blood overtook and slew him.

What would we think of a mariner, when his vessel struck upon a reef, whose exhausted strength scarce sufficed to place him on some slippery summit, where he might abide till the tempest was allayed, if, moved by the avaricious impulse of appropriating to himself some floating treasure, he plunged anew into the boiling surge, and braved, for a bauble, its dangers and its chances; should we not esteem such a person lost alike to the impulses of seriousness, and the regard for self-preservation? And surely, brethren, Christ is our refuge and rock—thither the sinner, thither the tempest-tost will flee. Why again plunge into the raging billows of this troublesome world, in quest of vain, delusive joys. What shall all profit if it put to hazard the immortal soul.

What cares the traveller, sinking in the Lydian sands, to know, as he perishes, that its grains are gold? Think you, that he strives to close his hands upon its valueless atoms? No: we do not

impute such exceeding folly to the dying man; for we are quite sure, that the imminence of his danger, and the innate desire of life, will engross every thought.

And yet, how is our folly less? Nay, rather, does it not much surpass his whose case we have been considering? For we have represented the instance of a man, who through error or misguidance, trusted his footsteps to the faithless shore. But who shall display the madness of the many, who, forewarned of their peril, build houses upon such shifting foundations, and then marvel, if they fall amidst floods and storms?

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Hear that voice, now pleading before God, now calling on you to consider your ways. Hear it, and your soul shall live. Choose between God and the world, and be thankful that the option is vouchsafed you. Loud and distinct as is the call, and holy the voice that summons to everlasting life, its tones are ofttimes drowned in the death-shout of the adversary and his angels; or, unheeded, from the seductive softness of his winning numbers. Both speak; both persuade: one to save, the other to destroy. One covers all faces with shame and confusion—the other dresses believers in the robes of his righteousness. One from below—the other from above. What shall we say then? What, but with the apostle: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven."

SERMON XI.

HEBREWS, xii. 28.

"Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, that we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

WHEN we contemplate man in a state of natural religion, unacquainted with the scheme of redemption—but not unimpressed by the conviction, that an immortal and infinite being presides over the world—we discern him disposed to pay homage to this unknown ruler, with profound reverence and fear.

A sense of dependence upon some mysterious power, seems an innate sentiment of the human heart, and whether it assume the aspect of superstitious devotion, or be elevated to the standard of reverential piety, it still bears testimony to man's weakness, and to the majesty of God. That this

persuasion was implanted in our minds for a wise purpose, can scarcely admit of question, nor indeed demand proof. It is clearly the foundation, we cannot say of redemption, but that on which all moral and religious principle is erected, and the seed, which however deeply buried in the earth, does eventually reach the surface, and display the leaf, the blade, and the fruit.

It may be asked—if this be a correct statement, why is not the course of moral and religious discovery progressive in conformity to analogy with all other sciences? I think that this analogy exists, and with much exactitude, and that moral and religious discoveries have advanced among nations in full proportion to all other branches of human knowledge.

If indeed, we limit our observation to the practice of the uninformed multitudes which crowded the heathen temples of Greece and Rome, we might conclude that time had rather corrupted what once was pure, than purified any corruptions which the ignorance of ruder ages may have introduced; and so it would seem to have been. Whatsoever derived its origin from natural religion, or was traceable through some of the many traditionary streams, to the primal fountain of divine revelation, was debased, by the superstition or sensuality of the vulgar. Thus upon sacrifice was grafted the doctrine of omens—upon mystery, voluptuousness—

and even the gifts of prophecy, whether real or feigned, were converted into instruments of deception and of venality. But granting all this, it does not follow, nor in fact was it so, that the better and the wiser sort, were dupes of these impostures, or accessory to their being practised upon the people. As little reason is there for supposing that such men attached any credit to the popular belief. On the contrary, the imperishable pages of the heathen moralists, demonstrate that the leading virtues which adorn humanity, found apologists and admirers among thinking men; and still more, that their conceptions of one supreme being, eternal, and omniscient, lost much of its grossness, by being refined in the alembic of their meditations; and that the adoration they inferred would befit him, approached more nearly to that commanded by one who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. It is quite true, that as far as we know, heathen rites were not reduced to a moral system, nor did any community renounce belief in the fabled attributes of their imaginary gods, as intrinsically degrading to the dignity, and repulsive to the character of immortal beings. It is not meant to be asserted here, that the uninstructed mass of the people had benefitted by the light of reason, as affecting their religious belief—we inquire concerning the learned and wise; and though the world by wisdom knew not God as

manifested in his Son, yet did the reflections of wise men give evidence of minds soaring to very high discoveries of the divine essence. They appear to have reached a point beyond which they knew not how to advance, and yet at which they plainly saw they ought not to stop.

A barrier interposed strong enough to resist their further progress, yet at whose base they continually stood, in the hope that some means might be afforded of enabling them to pass it.

The impediment was felt and acknowledged, but not surmounted ; it was distinctly seen, that human virtue could never, in its practice, fulfil the abstract conditions required by philosophy, and, therefore, must necessarily fall short of that excellence which the supreme God demanded. How this deficiency was to be supplied, or in what manner the imperfection could be tolerated, exhausted and confounded reason. Human nature was shown to be unequal to the task of elevating itself to a level with the divine ; and therefore the divine was compelled to descend to the human. Now, perhaps, this is the cause why some of the gods of antiquity are represented as having dwelt upon the earth, and imparted somewhat of their own perfections to mankind, where perfections were ascribed to them, even of their vices ; or we may indeed discern in such a circumstance vestiges of an expected Emmanuel, and adore the wondrous prefiguring of " God manifest

in the flesh." Why then shall we not equally perceive him beneath the deceiving current of long depraved worship? Is it because it is depraved? Probably this may be the real cause; but be that as it may, it seems not unreasonable to suppose, that the notion of the gods coming down to sojourn upon earth, derived its source from forgotten or corrupted revelation, in which the promise of a Saviour was contained.

But this may appear to militate against my previous argument—by implying that even the difficulties adverted to, were overcome! A closer inspection will, I should hope, do away with this impression: the matter of surprise is, that while the sublimer attributes of the supreme Governor were, in a great measure, comprehended, wise and reflecting men should not have investigated more particularly the primal origin of popular belief in this respect.

Perhaps, by investigation, some early communication might have been discovered, and inferences drawn, confirmatory of the obligation under which mankind laboured, to attain to a higher state of purity, ere entrance could be had to the celestial abodes, and led to a more advanced contemplation of the one only way. Nor does this conjecture usurp the province of Scripture, but rather belongs to general history; from the former we know, that whatsoever might suffice to impart a full apprehen-

sion of the heavenly will, was graciously vouchsafed to our first parents, and their immediate descendants, and both one and the other lend their testimony to the assurance that this grace bestowed was neglected, or forgotten.

Mankind departed from knowledge given, to such a length indeed did they wander, that no means remained of returning to the path they had abandoned. The world at large had totally lost sight of religious truth, as revealed; and the lingering rays of pale morality, constituted the sole light which served to show the way. True, that this light did lighten the Gentiles, not to the sacrifice of the holiest in heaven, yet to a bright conception of the divine nature. But what are all our abstract conceptions of truth and holiness? what avail the purest notions human creatures can form upon the eternity, or omniscience of God, if the love he bore the world be not amongst them? and that a comprehension of that love did not hold a place in the system of philosophy is of universal admission. A God retired from all labor, wrapped up in his own perfections, and careless of the ways, or wants, or sorrows of man; this was esteemed by a great sect, as the test of a being sublimated far above human nature—but a God of love was an unknown God—a covenant God was an unknown God—a God freely bestowing the gifts and graces of his Spirit upon man was an unknown God—a God reconciling a sinful world to himself by the

blood of his Son, was entirely an unknown God. And of spiritual influences, the sages of the early world seem to have had a very imperfect, or viewing the subject in a scriptural light, no conception. That their gods infused ideas into the minds of men, was, however, of popular belief, and the dream and the vision, and the mental impression, there admitted to exist as active agents in forming, guiding, or changing, human councils. Some theory also, of the subtle universality of a penetrating first cause distinct from matter prevailed, alluded to by the apostle in his address to the Athenians; yet how infinitely below the level of revelation, all these inferences of reason fell, and to what humbling convictions of human insufficiency they were calculated to lead.

At length it pleased God to unfold the mighty scheme of redemption, long laid up in the eternal mind.

The sacrifice of Christ was displayed in all its fulness, the dominion of philosophy was invaded, and overspread by the power of the gospel, and a body of followers chosen from amongst the world, distinct in the hope they rested on, the belief they confessed, and the allegiance they bore; and to these, as to a trusty band, the Saviour gives the animating assurance and command—"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke, xii. 32.)

The apostle had spoken of states of religion which had been shaken, and his object is manifestly to compare the gospel dispensation with them; and this dispensation he describes as immoveable. The voice which shook the earth, once more uttered, "will shake not the earth only, but the heavens." And we are further told, that this "once more," signifies the removal of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made; that those things that are not shaken may remain. "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace to serve God acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear." The kingdom here promised, is represented as an issue or consequence, from premises already set forth—we may consider what it is, how it is immoveable—how the grace is bestowed, which enables us to serve God acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear. "If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. i. 8.)

In the preceding passages, the apostle has depicted with great force, and sublimity of language, the transitoriness of those states of religion which went before the gospel dispensation. He describes the terrors attendant upon the giving of the law, and contrasts them with the peaceful exhibition of Divine love in the Messiah—"Ye are not come to the Mount that might be touched, and that

burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness, and tempest, but ye are come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel: whose voice then shook the earth, and signifieth the removal of those things that are shaken, that these things which cannot be shaken may remain.

St. Paul appears to point to the removal of the ancient systems of Jewish and heathen worship, for the passage is in a great measure a transcript from the prophet Haggai, who treats of spiritual kingdoms, and it may be presumed that the application made here is of similar design: "I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Hag. ii. 6, 7.) And "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace." (Haggai, ii. 9.) The passages are obviously similar, and institute the same comparison between the exterior magnificence of the early temple, and the spiritual glory of the latter, wherein Christ taught; and as the former house gave way to its more distinguished successor, so the previous dis-

pensations under which the Jews subsisted, faded before the brightness of the coming of the Son of man.

The apostle draws a distinction between these dispensations, which, according to the prophecy, were to be shaken, and his own kingdom, of which it was said that it should never be moved.

The phrase, under different acceptations, occurs frequently in the New Testament—the kingdom of God; the kingdom of heaven; the kingdom of glory; the everlasting kingdom, &c. The prophet Daniel in the Old, speaks of a kingdom which "shall never be destroyed," (Daniel, ii. 44,) and which the Lord shall set up. This must denote the kingdom of Christ, as mentioned in the text of today.

The prophet, and the apostle, look upon the same picture. Now, this picture cannot altogether, or alone, represent an after kingdom in a future state; for it adverts to one already received, though not fully. The perfect enjoyment of its privileges is reserved for a future state, when the kingdom of gospel glory shall rule over the kingdom of gospel grace—and the warring of Christ's kingdom upon earth, be stilled in the peace of his kingdom in heaven. Meanwhile, we know, that the happiness of this preliminary kingdom, with its spiritual blessings and privileges, may be properly considered as introductory to the possession of the more finished work in the kingdom

of glory. Even Daniel, triumphing in the anticipated dominion which the God of heaven would set up and give to the Son of man, could not exclude from his view the primary, though imperfect government, at his first coming upon earth. Our Saviour, also, has frequently respect to the same thing; for instance, "Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." And again, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven;" or as he seems to intimate—be enrolled amongst the called, to the knowledge of the scheme of salvation, through the atoning blood of Jesus. And this state of the church and gospel in the world, connected as it is with the state of grace in the soul, has plainly received the promise, that it shall spread and increase—"For the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." (Matt. xiii. 31, 32.)

Over this preparatory kingdom, our Lord reigneth, making manifest, by the continual acts of his providence, his power, his majesty, and his glory, his mercy to the penitent, judgment to the

unrepentant, long-suffering to all, till men are brought to know "that the Most High ruleth in in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Daniel, iv. 32.) On such as obey the truth, and have pleasure in righteousness, he bestows the sweet influence of his assisting grace, softening the stony heart, and bending the stubborn neck to that yoke which is easy, and that burthen which is light.

They to whom the apostle writes were thought worthy of the free favour and love of God, of the out-pourings from the eternal fountain, the source and spring of every blessing, for such are "called with a holy calling." From this rock of our salvation, flow the streams which purify and sanctify the whole living soul of man. These unmerited waters, taking their rise solely from the divine will, roll over the barren surface of the world, and make glad its cities, and fertilize its plains; and the breathings of the Spirit of God, moving upon the waters of grace, swell the sails of the ark of his church, and waft it to the shores of the eternal kingdom. Through this love did God devise the scheme of man's redemption—through this love he guides and strengthens the believer to obey his will, to resist, and finally to overcome sin—through this love alone, he arrives at that state of reconciliation, and friendship with God, to which he graciously admits his faithful people. Impelled by its gentle

motions, and with wills and affections subdued to its sway, believers receive the proffered gift into their hearts. The glad tidings of the gospel covenant find a ready entrance into minds where the power of godliness prevails over worldly lusts, and high thoughts being all lowered, men, as declared in the text, "receive the kingdom."

There is a kingdom which Christ has promised at the consummation of all things to the blessed of his Father; but this could not yet be received by those to whom the apostle writes, unless in a figure. There is, besides, a kingdom which "cometh not with observation;" neither shall men say, "Lo here, or lo there" (Luke, xvii. 20, 21); and this may indeed be pointed at by the apostle—that kingdom where Christ dwells richly in the heart by faith, and which must be received as little children, or it is not received at all. Then the apostle cannot assert that the kingdom here treated of is one wherein the receivers shall enjoy present authority. I apprehend that his meaning is quite contrary, and that he rather inculcates a submission to power, than a usurpation of it—a spiritual and unlimited acquiescence in the government of Christ our King, whose cross was his sceptre, and Calvary his throne.

To receive a kingdom thus understood is to be subject to a royal sway, not to exercise it—to obey, not to command—to serve in the household of faith, and not to lord it over God's heritage. Faith joy-

fully embraces the godliness which is profitable in all things, and the humblest spirit seeks admission into that fellowship of working where service is perfect freedom.

Oh ye who now hear me, whose blessed lot it is to receive in faith the present kingdom of your crucified Redeemer, ye can understand what the words of the apostle are designed to express—ye whom the grace of God has called with an everlasting calling, ye know clearly what this meaneth, receive the kingdom.

The rebel opposes it, the alien denies it, the stranger hath no part in it; but to all who will receive it, it is righteousness, joy, and peace; righteousness which is of the Lord, and joy no man taketh from you, and peace such as the world cannot give.

Moreover, it is an abiding kingdom; all others previously proposed to the allegiance of mankind had been shaken; they all waxed old as doth a garment, and as a vesture were changed; but the kingdom of Christ endureth for ever: and we may here observe of believers, that they are represented as having received it—not merely that it has been offered to them, but that they have received it: they have accepted the terms of loyalty, in which they pledge themselves to continue for ever; for, as it is said that the kingdom itself cannot be moved, so neither should the subjects, nor can they, if, as the branches abide in the parent vine, they abide in their

King. Believers know that it is only by faith that the peace promised is partaken of on earth, and therefore expect no respite from the assaults of the enemy; but they know also, that the enemy shall have no power to destroy them, or pluck them out of their Master's hand; for strong is the man who hath rescued, and will retain them, and faithful the promise that he will be with them, even to the end of the world.

But though the apostle may affirm that believers have received the kingdom, he is far from assuring them that they cannot fall away, and become fugitives and renegades from the royal presence.

He rather inculcates the necessity they are placed in, to have, or as is more in conformity with the original language, to "hold" the grace whereby they may serve God acceptably with godly fear; and he useth the term grace, as it would seem, with the view of fixing the character of the dispensation to which his observations belong. The same grace through which believers become subjects of the kingdom is that whereby they abide in it—that grace which bringeth salvation enables men to remain within the terms of the covenant. The same regenerating power it is that still exercises a holy influence over the persuaded mind, and testifieth, "Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God."

And why this condition, which implies how blind is our vision? Why, but because these things are spi-

ritually discerned. Now, they who are thought worthy of receiving the kingdom are vouchsafed the sufficient gift of grace to offer reasonable service: "He (saith the apostle) that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." (Rom. xiv. 18.) The promise of future inheritance waiting on the sons of the resurrection doth indeed declare that they shall reign with Christ a thousand years, and sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; but with this we do not conceive ourselves, while merely expounding the passage before us, to have any concern. We learn the conditions of the introductory state, without being necessarily informed upon all the details of that which is final. Happy are they to whom the mysteries of either dispensation have been so unfolded as to satisfy their convictions, and sanctify their hearts. It is theirs to come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain help in time of need; and this brings us to the latter portion of the text—namely, the object on which the grace prayed for should be employed—namely, "To serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

How much of the creature's duty is comprised in these words? If, as has been already stated, the awe-struck heathen adored with reverence and fear, the Being whose attributes he but imperfectly comprehended; if the patriarch, on his lonely way, felt the deep sentiment of a present God, may not

we Christians likewise exclaim, surely God is in this place; may we not, nay, must we not, give thanks for the free gift, and praise the Lord for all his goodness and for the wonders that he doeth for the children of men?

For were not this gift bestowed, what would be our service? The prayers of the wicked? an unaccepted abomination—the sacrifice of fools? an unreasonable oblation—the polluted offerings of guilty sinners, of men untransformed and unsanctified—the unclean devotions of the exiled leper, bursting through the barriers which excluded him from communion with his fellows, and audaciously determined to display his infectious body within the camp, and tainting with his foul breath the victim and the altar. Then what hath the Lord, our righteousness, done for us; hath he not washed out the stain which defiled all our worship? Hath he not opened the long closed way that leads to the sanctuary? Hath he not shed his own enlightening beams, and made the comers thereunto perfect, by his own perfect offering? Else were all our service unholy.

Thus Christ sanctifies the heart and disposes it to holiness. Through him come those humbling convictions of guilt which fallen creatures must experience before they can hope for, or ask for, mercy. Other thoughts of sin than we are wont to nurture, will take their station in the mind, and a far fuller

conviction of its heinousness overspread the soul, ere we can "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service;" (Rom. xii. 1,) nor yet prove what is "his acceptable will."

Men are taught not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. The Spirit of God disperses the clouds which obscure our conceptions of the nature of sin, and represents it in all its real offensiveness as it appears before his pure eyes. "Then (saith the prophet) "shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) And to like effect speaketh the apostle—"Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

The convinced sinner will so walk. His first impulse is like that of the prodigal—a resolution, "I will arise, and go to my Father." His next, a confession—"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." His third, a supplication—"Make me as one of thy hired servants." Such is the Christian's progress. He has left his Father's house, and become an alien, an exile, and a stranger; but brought back by the sufficient grace, he returns to stray no more, but to walk in the way of truth—"worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called;"—

"in newness of life;"—worthy of the Lord in all pleasing—"fervent in business, serving the Lord." And truly to serve God is the first and great commandment, the main business of our lives. Widely, indeed, do we mistake the nature of that service, when we regard it otherwise than as a gracious privilege bestowed upon us, to the exercise of which we were utterly without claim.

For what of intrinsic merit, what of purity, what of holy zeal, do we possess, that would support our plea to be admitted into the household of God? That God uses corrupt and sinful instruments to accomplish his designs, the word of truth assures us; and we can reconcile his dealings, in such respects, with our own notions of the divine integrity; for no necessity is apparent why he should, as it were, identify himself with the agents he employs. But when the Almighty seeks servants, in whose offices he delights—when he summons around him the hosts of the faithful, and the multitudes of ministering spirits—when the creatures he has made are to be admitted into a fellowship of work, and a participation in the divine nature—then, surely, it must be regarded as a high and glorious elevation, to be enrolled in the catalogue of servants.

In previous discourses I have chiefly dwelt upon the services of the sanctuary; following, as I conceive, the line of elucidation used by the apostle,

whose design is, to make manifest, in the new covenant, those spiritual services toward the heavenly, which, in the old, were directed to the worldly temple.

Thus, in the ancient law, ceremonial observances and sacrifices, sanctified the comers thereunto, so that they could render acceptable service, with reverence and godly fear. So, in the new covenant, the love of Christ shed abroad in the hearts of believers, makes acceptable their service at the throne of grace. And God has condescended, by the voice of his apostles and prophets, to make known to us, that there are services men may render, at which he is well pleased; and servants, whose fruit is holiness and everlasting life.

St. Paul displays, in his wonted strain of holy glorying, how high are the claims he may assert to the adequacy of his own services: "In labours more abundant than they all." In fastings, in watchings, in preaching the gospel in every city; in perils by land, in perils by water, in perils among false brethren; by pureness, by knowledge, by love unfeigned. Bonds, afflictions, stripes, and stonings, proved, but failed to subdue his burning zeal; and temptations, and trials, of every kind, strove in vain to separate him from the love of Christ. And yet the apostle felt that having done all, he was still an unprofitable servant, and one who had not apprehended fully his duty. But the Saviour, in his own person, dig-

nified the station, by taking upon him the form of a servant. He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, appeared on earth as a servant, though Lord of all. We are called as freemen, and "being free, are Christ's servants; not the servants of man, being bought with a price." (1 Cor. vii. 22.) And the price which was paid for our redemption did also purify us a people peculiar to him; sanctified, and zealous of good works.

It may be that time and circumstances have abated somewhat of the external trials by which the sincerity of our devotion to God is attested. The labours and the dangers encountered by the apostle are little likely to be proposed in the present day to any Christian; and men seldom, in our period, work out salvation with wearied soul and oppressed body in any measure comparable to the travail of St. Paul. Still be it not forgotten, that the sacred obligation to service remains unchanged and ineffaceable; the covenant is everlasting, and stamps its seal upon a dispensation, the last, as now it is the only one, bestowed on mankind. This being so, and no new state springing up from the abolition of that which hath been shaken, it behoves us much, to remember that our services, whatsoever they be, must be now acceptable, or they are useless—must now avail, or never. If we cannot attain to the knowledge and practice of serving God now, we can indulge in no grounded or

rooted hope that we shall be enabled to supply the deficiency at any future time, or through any other means. Nor are we left without witness of what that meaneth, "acceptable service." St. John discerned, in that wondrous vision wherein was raised the vail that screens from mortal gaze, the secrets of the unknown world—men serving God day and night before his throne. The triumphant hallelujah of these glorified saints swells its endless tone in presence of the Ancient of Days; the Lamb gives these servants their food, and leads them forth to the fountains of living waters; so that they shall hunger no more, and thirst no more. Now, these praises are clearly "acceptable service," and accepted in heaven. And who are they thus qualified to please God? The apostle tells. Not the wise of this world, whose abstracted meditations rested upon a philosophic First Cause, and deemed the discovery of his nature and essence a sufficient acquisition for human minds; not the sons and daughters of prosperity, who know no limit to gratification but their own powers of enjoyment, and would only consent to serve their Creator, if they could do so without toil. No, the apostle saw none of these; but he saw men who had been purified in the furnace of affliction, and through many tribulations entered into the kingdom of heaven. And the Father seeketh such to worship him.

"My soul, (saith the Psalmist,) wait thou still

upon God; for of him is thy salvation." And the answer our Blessed Lord gave the tempter is to the like effect—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Shall we particularize any of the duties required? If we do, that which God most delights in cannot fail to strike first and plainest; I mean the devout adoration of assembled worshippers. This holy practice is the mother from whom many sons proceed—the stem fruitful in every branch. It is from beneath the consecrated roof, that the household of faith do ofttimes come forth, enlightened by her services, and warmed by her devotions; with hearts opened to sanctifying influences, and minds persuaded of eternal truth. They feel themselves to be acceptable servants, and receive by faith the kingdom, which through grace they will maintain.

True, that their work is here, but not their wages. Let this be so, but to the servant of God no disappointment follows; for what does he see around him that would satisfy the aspirings of an immortal soul? A world ruined by sin—every where the ineffaceable traces of the evil one.

But he doubts not the accomplishment of God's purposes which he hath revealed in Christ, and humbly trusts that his own portion with the glorified just will not be denied him. And believers are no more servants, but heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Theirs is the foretaste of happi-

ness, and they enjoy it—theirs is the promise, and they possess it; for their good works do follow them, and the kingdom which they received below, realized in Jerusalem which is above, welcomes them through its eternal entrance. The grace which they have held on earth changes them from glory to glory; for by this grace they are made to persevere unto the end.

Henceforth let no man trouble them: there is laid up in store a gladness which none can take away—a kingdom immoveable, and a deathless crown—a grace which never fails, a service which never tires—unblemished holiness and perfect love.

SERMON XII.

HEB. xiii. 15.

"By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."

THE efforts which we make to propitiate the favor of God, afford no inaccurate criterion of the love and reverence we bear him.

We might measure all human affection by a like standard, though not without the conviction that fear also, as well as love, or reverence, must be admitted into the estimate. In the affairs of this life, the value of the patronage is often alloyed by the awe with which men regard the patron, and the gift itself loses half its grace from the discourtesy of the giver. Thus, many men shrink from the unpalatable humiliation of supplicating benefits from a fellow worm; or if necessity constrain, or ambition

urge it, the clouded brow betrays the mental conflict, and announces in language not to be misunderstood, how reluctant is the submission which circumstances impose. Now, somewhat of this sentiment appears to result from the unwillingness of the dependant party to receive favors which it cannot hope to repay, and this will operate with greatest force upon the most generous dispositions. Somewhat also, arises from the pride and littleness of the human heart refusing to acknowledge superiority, while it stops to request and to receive obligation. In each case, there is an implied censure upon the moral Governor of the world, and an arraignment of his distribution of its temporal advantages; for what other interpretation can be put upon the phrases with which envy would disguise its pangs, when styling prosperity fortuitous and unmerited, or disappointment veil its repinings beneath the cloak of feigned resignation; or lofty bearing, disdain to owe kindness to God, through the ministration of the creatures he has made?

But widely different in their effects, are those mutual interchanges of Christian fellowship of help and favors, which denote the followers of him, who ordained that his disciples should be known of all, by their love one towards another. Far, indeed, is it from the spirit of Christianity, to reject with scorn and pride, the tribute of affection. Nay, a mind rightly disciplined, will welcome the occasions

which give exercise to the virtue of gratitude in itself, if not for its own sweetness, yet for his sake, who may claim all we can bestow. Gratitude, certainly ranks amongst the most softening, as it is one of the noblest qualities of the human heart. The pages of history, both sacred and profane, record many an instance of the most disinterested abandonment of self, springing from this fountain.

Its source is seated deep in the breast, and continues to flow when all else is dried up. The sentiment abides, in defiance of torture or of death, and establishes itself in the citadel of our strongest feeling, unshaken by violence, unlured by profit, and unsubdued by fears.

And it is well that these things should so be—it is right to foster a propensity, honourable alike to the heart and judgment, and productive of so much present happiness. Nor hath it alone the life that now is, but also the promise of that which is to come. That to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength, that first and great commandment, may in a great measure result from a mere contemplation of his attributes, is quite true. A God of perfect purity, and knowledge, and justice, and of infinite mercy, might properly challenge our love; and would obtain it, were we ourselves pure, and just, and merciful. This, however, not being the case, these glorious parts of the divine holiness make a comparatively feeble

impression upon our minds. We love God imperfectly, and not for his excellence, for we are unable to discern it, but because he first loved us, and because we feel some of his protecting care and providence, and even this love is weakened within us by the influence of a worldly spirit, operating upon our worldly bosoms.

The transition from love to gratitude, if in the case now under consideration we can discover any distinction, is short and easy; and gratitude suggests the claim to recompense, and reciprocal services. "What reward," saith David, "shall I give unto the Lord, for all the benefits which he hath done unto me?" His answer belongs to our present subject—"I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay my vows unto the Most High." Now this is the point to be considered.

A serious mind will meditate with intense earnestness, upon what may be the probable mode of gratifying a being exempt from every want, and susceptible of no passion. The infinite essence of God removes him so far from our human nature, that it seems almost a hopeless endeavour to aim at any sensible intercourse, such as our narrow faculties can apprehend. Yet he hath not left himself without a witness in our hearts, nor suffered his truth to fail, from want of the persuasions of the answering conscience. On the contrary, deep and convincing spiritual demonstrations reward the labor

bestowed on an object worthy our best and fairest desires. A trust that they are not utterly disregarded, sustains us in the darksome way over which our thoughts must journey, ere full conviction terminates in possession. Still, however calm and placid the mind may feel, it is never altogether free from latent disquietude. Some lurking suspicion constantly disturbs its repose, some fears founded upon the confessed worthlessness of all its imaginations and works. The stain of sin defiles every garment, and excludes from the divine presence. We fain would approach it, but we dare not stand upon the hallowed ground; we fain would offer up our praises at the throne of glory, but the unsanctified incense sinks to the earth, a dense and unsightly vapour. These considerations are calculated, in their primary effect, to discourage even confirmed minds, and perhaps do operate more permanently than most persons are disposed to admit; for the positive and immediate advantages of prayer and praise, taken apart from the precept, and without respect to their influence upon our own minds, are not very manifest.

It would be no easy matter to convince an unrenewed person, that the exercise of prayer could be in itself beneficial. That silent improvement which it works in the heart, would be to him entirely unintelligible; his unaided reason could not receive the persuasion that gain might arise to his own

mind, from the exercise of praising another, however deserving. If then this profit arising from praising a being of infinite purity and holiness, be not so obvious to the natural man, as to satisfy him of the important influence it may exercise even over the rational faculty, still less will he be inclined to acquiesce in ascribing a similar power to prayer. As a means of obtaining a favourable answer to his supplication, or of averting a calamity through the intervention of some supernatural authority, prayer commends itself to almost every breast. Hours of affliction, periods of sudden danger or emergency, awaken the confession of slumbering dependance upon a superior being; to pray, or rather to appeal, in terror and agony, to whomsoever fancy or habit, or education may prompt, is of almost universal practice; although men cannot decide *a priori* that these entreaties will be heard or received. We cannot know before-hand, without revelation of the fact, that the God to whom we pray, I mean we to whom the knowledge of the truth has been imparted, will delight in this homage of his creatures.

Indeed so far are we from being competent to decide with certainty upon this point, that we are rather disposed to cavil at the teaching which assures us of it; for we require to be taught by some high authority, that God approves of such acts of homage and honor, seeing that we discern no necessary connection between the fulfilment of them on our

parts, and the gratification which he may experience; nay, the obstacles we have already referred to, interpose a formidable barrier, and deter us too frequently by their number and magnitude.

And here the revealed word does happily come to our aid; through it we procure an acquaintance with these consolatory doctrines, and learn to render them applicable to our daily conduct. That word assures us, that though indeed the prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord, those of the just are his delight. This fact would seem to result from our former premises, and is a conclusion which we might draw without much difficulty, for if it be established that God loves the creatures he has made, it would follow that a reciprocal sentiment on their part, must be pleasing to him. It is of the nature of love to desire a return; and we may, without presumption, ascribe a participation in this universal law to God himself. But it is also of the nature of love to seek the object on which its affections are bent; hence Christ in fulfilling the love of God towards man, came to seek sinners, that he might save them. Now, what is prayer but a seeking by man of his Creator? If we say that the silent homage of the heart is a sufficient acknowledgment in his eyes to whom all hearts are open; we answer, that this in itself is prayer—and prayer, reasonable, and we trust, in so far as it proceeds, acceptable. But we are

instructed in the written word, that God requires more of us than this contemplative adoration; and we know that he has pointed out the way through which a closer approach may be made to himself, and a more intimate communion instituted and perfected. I do not speak of public ministration or observance, nor of the special and peculiar blessings annexed to them, for this would anticipate another branch of the subject, which may be discussed at a later period; but of all prayer, and all praise, without limitation, of that in short recommended by the apostle, when he says, "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise unto God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name."

Now, the apostle describes this offering as a sacrifice, and being such, it was manifest that man a sinner, could not presume to present it. He therefore directs us to him who could, to the mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, our High Priest, holy, harmless, undefiled, who would bring it within the vail. It is, therefore, that he is very explicit in his exhortation, and admonishes us to offer it, as you may note in the text, "By him," not by ourselves, for this is forbidden, seeing that we are unholy, and could not enter into the 'holiest,' but by him who brings us nigh by the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Now, this is a great mystery, and the words of

this truth teaches a very important lesson. May the grace of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, guide, and strengthen, and sanctify our labours, that we may rightly divide it; for of that divine power, which giveth us both to will and to do, doth the good gift come, that we justly apprehend or clearly express, the precepts of eternal life. Three topics of utmost moment, appear dependant upon the passage chosen as the heading of this discourse.

First, that it behoves us to offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually. Secondly—that this sacrifice is the fruit of our lips; and thirdly—that it must be offered through Christ only. When we enter upon the consideration of our own duty, we at once turn to the inquiry, of how the pious of old acquitted themselves of similar obligations before God.

These of whom the world was not worthy, and who all died in the faith, are set up as cities upon hills, for travellers to descry and shape their course towards. Now, David affords numerous illustrations of the difficulties which may be experienced in discovering a mode of adoration agreeable unto God. Especially of sacrifice, he saith, "Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it thee, but thou delightest not in burnt offerings. Rivers of oil, ten thousand in number, dried up by the sun of righteousness cease to pour their holy streams, and

the beasts of the forest, and the cattle of the hills, stand unaccepted in the courts of our God." Yet, it was evident to those, whom God had instructed in his law, that something must be offered, some oblation made, such as should purge the conscience from dead works. Justice demanded the death of the sinner. Mercy received a substitution, and one died for many. Christ died for all men, and mercy triumphant, rejoiced over judgment. But the apostle, in the Scripture now before us, does not treat of the all-sufficient merit of the one only oblation, sacrifice, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. He hath already in this epistle, dwelt on the immensity of this stupendous atonement. His view, in that portion of the general subject at present under examination, seems bent towards the ordinary offerings of daily homage, which each and every sinner, cannot safely neglect. The psalmist frequently explains them in such phrases as these—

"I will offer unto thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay my vows unto the Most High." And again, "Let my prayer be set forth in thy sight, as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." (Psalm cxli. 2.) By these Scriptures we are taught that prayer and praise are recognized as holy and acceptable presentations of sacrificial adoration unto God.

Not that we affirm prayer and praise to partake of the character of sacrificial expiation—of expia-

tory sacrifices, for we sinners cannot offer sacrifice for sin, nor is there any necessity that we should do so.

Our peace, the Lamb of God, the Lamb slain, and offered, and accepted; Christ our passover, sacrificed for us, is our meritorious sacrifice of atonement. But a sacrifice of acknowledgment is demanded of us, and a sacrifice which, sinners as we are, we yet are competent to pay. A sacrifice, on the head of which we lay our hands, and confess ourselves guilty and unclean, and then plead the sacrifice of expiation vicariously put to death.

To this we are debtors, and enjoined to offer it up continually; always to pray, and never to faint; always to stir up the gift that is within us, by earnest seeking of the God who gave it, and never to suffer the lamps that light our orisons to expire. Moreover, this offering must be of our own voluntary act, suggested by the Spirit of God, not wrung from us by slavish terror, or bestowed as a gift; why should we come before the presence of the Lord, either boastful of presenting that we have received from him, or as reluctant victims struggling to avoid impending death?

His gates must be gone into with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. His name spoken good of: and this the subject of our thoughts and language—"An offering of a free-will heart will I give unto thee: and praise thy name, O Lord,

because it is so comfortable." The apostle further intimates that Christ is our altar. Alas! how few accept the invitation to offer themselves upon it, to present, and purify in its fires, themselves, their souls and bodies—to consume their offences for ever in its hallowed flame. Yet it is this altar, now reared in heaven, which attests to men and angels, that the waters of sin shall no more overwhelm the earth. Like Noah's, it stands a monument that the floods of the Divine wrath have subsided. A bow set in the clouds for all men to gaze on, and be at ease. Like Jacob's pillar, it records the angelic ministries which point the way to heaven, and gives to the listening ear of faith its solemn testimony—"This is the house of God."

In truth, all our intercourse with the Creator, strictly considered, resolves itself into sacrifice. Our prayer is sacrifice; our praise is sacrifice; we offer the sacrifice of a broken heart, and of a wounded spirit. We sacrifice upon the altar of Christ, the old man whom we have crucified, and the body of sin abolished through him. We present ourselves a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice; we offer our souls and bodies, and die daily. And why this service? Because the temple shadows are no more, and spirit and truth have succeeded to external rites; and the blessed day of the gospel has brought to light how God will be worshipped; and his sanctuary and his temple are established in

the breast of the true believer, and not upon the visible mountains of prostrate Jerusalem. Nor can that sanctuary, or temple, be established in the breast even of the believer, unless his soul be at peace. As it was not given to David, vexed by ceaseless war, to build a house for God : so neither may the troubled spirit, still struggling with passions, follies, and vanities, and engrossed with cares and turmoil, erect the fabric wherein Jehovah can reign undisturbed. The dust of battle blinds the willing eyes—and clouds rising from the trampled field, obscure the bright, the glorious, the saving cross of Christ, which shines eternal in the heavens. Further, the apostle tells us, that this offering, or sacrifice, is the fruit of our lips. Now, when mention is made of fruit, it suggests the idea, first of soil and seed ; next, of the cultivation bestowed upon the growing plants ; then of the bud and blossoms ; lastly, of the fruit itself. Apply these considerations to the heart. That the good seed has been sown in it, we know ; for the Spirit of God is the sower, and God himself the husbandman. Now, if out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and if the thoughts of the heart be only evil continually, what value shall we ascribe to the fruit that springs from such a soil. Surely, we would affirm, that a root of rottenness could only produce from its boughs the savour of death. Fruit, crumbling in the taster's hands into

vile and loathsome ashes, vain, empty, and unsubstantial as that which mocks the expectation beside the shores of the lifeless sea. The fruit of our lips! Alas! if fraud, deceit, and blasphemy, be fruits, then are our lips surpassing fruitful. Such were the fruits of the lips which called on the wavering Pilate to crucify the Lord of life and glory; and such the fruits which derided his dying agonies. Such, too, the fruit, whose fair but delusive glow, hangs from the lips of sinful man, and cheats many a weak brother by its specious promise—the tempter, who urges to disobedience, and brings destruction and sorrow into the world. Oh, my friends, if you would think upon these things in this way, you would see in every idle word, not merely the outward utterance of some foolish thought, some heedless wish, but a plain, intelligible offering to the enemy of souls: a lure held forth to win over to his side, the feeble, the inconstant, the perverse.

Who would willingly undergo the penalty annexed to such a crime, or acknowledge himself a contented servant of such a master—and yet, how evade the conclusion? Not, certainly, through the strength of natural reason, nor in the primary announcements of the revealed truth. But the word of God declares to the desponding sinner, that there is a way; for God is not an Egyptian taskmaster, who compels his people to make bricks,

while he refuses them straw. Christ, the way, purifies the heart by faith, and dwells richly within it, and waters it with the streams of his grace, and warms it with the sun-beams of his righteousness, and from its soil, honest and good, come fruits one hundred fold. Over these fruits the covering of Christ's righteousness is spread, else had the storm of the Divine displeasure burst forth to destroy. For did not he who is the true vine, sanctify the branches, what would flow but unholy juice to fill the wine-press of the wrath of God.

See, then, brethren, the love of the Lord—he sows the seed, his Spirit watches over its birth—he tills the soil, his grace waters it—he preserves the plant, he sanctifies the fruit—he accepts the offering, it is a holy sacrifice—he has set a watch over the lips, and has kept the doors of the heart—he has suffered no enemy to enter therein, to defile or to destroy—for "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things;" for the tongue of man is his undoubted glory, and must not be employed to any vile purpose, but rather to speak good things of God's name, and to declare his works with rejoicing. "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned," saith the Lord our righteousness. (Matt. xii. 37.)

The habit of addressing God in prayer, though first established in minds either altogether indifferent,

or it may be, unbelieving, will produce eventually, much happy persuasion.

The attributes of the Deity, being long made the object of our meditations and praise, become fixed in the convictions, and familiar to all our thoughts. Indeed it is only through such perseverance in the investigation of them, that their real nature is developed; or what perhaps is of no less importance, that the obscurity which hangs over them is removed. We are perfectly aware that in common life, the whole of any given object may be seen, or the whole of any given subject comprehended; and yet that the intervention of other objects, or topics, mingling with that which primarily attracts our notice, and is required to be reasoned upon, confuses our argument, and misleads us in our conclusions. Truth, however taken, is only truth, when without any mixture of error, and in matters of religious belief, this, if by reason of our finite faculties it be attainable at all, can only be arrived at (the Spirit of God assisting) through earnest contemplation, and through an acquired and continually nurtured practice of devotional exercises in prayer. Therefore it is that the apostle James receives our words as tests of our inward feelings, and supports the affirmation of St. Matthew, already cited. St. James saith, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." (James, iii. 2.) And St. Paul has no other maxim

in view, in the passage whence the text of this discourse has been taken, than to evince the necessity of a pure heart made manifest by the expressions of pure lips: and "A man (saith Solomon) shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth." The Jews appear to have understood, that a time would arrive when their burnt and sin-offerings should cease, but the unbloody oblation of prayer and praise still remain. "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, because they were not always before me. Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High." (Psalm l. 8, 14.) These offerings abide amongst us—the outpourings of grateful hearts, the fruits of devout lips.

They still abide amongst us; though the harps of Judah's minstrels swell their tones no more, crushed in the ruins of her fallen temple, though the chant of her gathering tribes perished in the wailings of captive Sion, and a long night of unbroken silence has drawn its sable veil over her daughters of music; they still abide a perennial stream, flowing undiminished from the heart of every true believer.

It is, in all truth, a precious privilege to be thus admitted into a fellowship of priesthood with Christ, through the free grace of God; and a melancholy reflection how often we are excluded from it by the abused and perverted freedom of the will of man. Yet it is so. The voice of God invites us to become kings and priests, a holy nation, a peculiar people.

The evil will of man tramples on these proud distinctions with disdain. Vile and polluted by sin, we cannot discharge the duties of the priesthood; but justice demands a sacrifice, and it must be offered: whither then shall we fly for succour? Holy Scripture indicates the way, and revelation, with unerring hand, beckons us to follow him who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life—our Hope, our Refuge, our Sacrificing Priest, our Sanctifier and Redeemer, and merciful Saviour. He alone, and he fully can make perfect our imperfect sacrifices by his own meritorious sacrifice, and make strong our weakness in his strength. "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

We have now spoken somewhat of the sacrifice, but little of the priest; and it is needful that there be a holy priest; for we, who are impure, cannot offer it. Christ is that Holy Priest, and we gladly expect that he will offer the sacrifice we have prepared—the fruit, or as the prophet Hosea hath it, "the calves of our lips." But are we sure that we have so obtained an interest in his availing intercession, that we may expect him to be our mediator. It is only a very small item in the sum of Christian knowledge to acquiesce in Christ's title to the office of high priest. This point may be freely conceded, and yet no vital truth ever savingly received into the heart. Faith in the Son of God is of a much more

intimate relationship. To be rooted and grounded in love are expressive terms; and all this must be, before we can be edified into the body of Christ, or make one with him, who is one with the Father.

The benefits of his precious blood-shedding are not obtained upon such easy terms, or his acts as our High Priest compulsory, according as we may will them. Men may indeed profess to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God, through Christ; but they must not hope that he will be their Priest, unless they have full faith in his atonement. By sufferings, he is made perfect, and by sufferings also men are perfected; and the promise is given to believers, that, after they have suffered a little while, he will strengthen, stablish, settle them. Until then—until we have suffered, we, properly speaking, have no interest in his blood. "Let us go, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." Let us take up our cross, and follow him, counting all but loss, if so be that we win him.

Let us go forth from this world, for here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come. Go forth from our guilty joys, our vain and idle pursuits, our pomp, and pride, and lusts, and follow him who suffered without the gate, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood. There, on Calvary, let us offer through him who died, the willing sacrifice of praise, and despise the shame and scandal of the accursed tree. The prayers which compose our

national Liturgy, as is fitting they should, all conclude with the acknowledgment, that they derive their efficacy through that name alone. The compilers of our forms of worship are therefore absolved from the charge of neglecting to set forth the doctrine of the cross. On men's own heads be it, if they reject the wholesome counsel, and forget the one only name whereby they may be saved. Ministers of the gospel cannot too earnestly promulgate this sacred truth. It is much to be feared that the intercessory supplication of prayer is overlooked. I mean, that worshippers do continually offer them up, merely as expressive of their own wants, or sorrows, or hopes, not considering the Lord's body, *by which only* they can reach the footstool of the throne of grace. Prayer so reft of its means is not prayer at all, nor is praise truly praise ; for God cannot receive them, seeing that there is no ministering high priest to offer them before him. Men do not offer this insult to the Redeemer's honor wantonly, or with design, but they do so through carelessness. Now, it is very blameable carelessness to pronounce the concluding words of our excellent prayers without reflecting upon their import: it demands our serious notice ; for it is an awful derogation from the efficacy of Christ's death.

Our souls' desire is, that we may be saved ; and when we confess that " we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Sa-

viour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works and deservings." And when further we are taught, that whatsoever we ask in the Son's name, believing, we shall receive, it were worse than folly to omit its use. It were a casting away the anchor of our soul, and suffering the vessel to drive without a compass through a starless sea. It were greater madness still; for in what does it fall short of erecting ourselves into a tower of strength, and defying the armies of the living God—of boldly mustering our own undisciplined battalions, and in frantic fury storming the citadel of the highest heavens?

But who shall present himself at the marriage supper, if not arrayed in becoming apparel; and whence draw forth his raiment, except from the wardrobe of the Saviour? It was not permitted to the Jews, under the Mosaic dispensation, to offer sacrifices, unless by worshippers previously sanctified. "Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice," is the saying of the faithful Samuel; and Hezekiah invites the people—"Now, ye have consecrated yourselves unto the Lord; come near, and bring sacrifices and thank-offerings into the house of the Lord," (2 Chron. xxix. 31,) and the prophet Micah asks of himself this humbling question, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the High God?" "Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah, vi. 6, 7.) The text assures us that the fruit of

our body is demanded: then beware lest our lips, whence this fruit issues, be defiled by things forbidden, and consequently unfit for the offering to pass through. God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth; and the fruit of our lips, like the words of the Saviour, must be spirit and truth; and then it becomes, through his mediation, numbered among those "spiritual sacrifices," commanded by the apostle, "acceptable to God through Christ Jesus." (1 Pet. ii. 5.)

We are taught that the blessed inhabitants of the eternal mansions, cease not day and night to praise the great Creator, for ever manifesting their sense of his glorious majesty. On us a like duty is enjoined—to bend all our thoughts upwards, and whatsoever we do, in word or in deed, to do all for the honour of God, to have our conversation in heaven: to let holy aspirations follow quickly upon the track of their fellows; and make our morning and our evening sacrifice—the one to glow upon the altar, ere the flame which consumed the other has expired. Alas! dear friends, I well know, I profoundly deplore it, that too many regard these exercises as irksome, tedious, burdensome, or unmeaning. Because they cannot discern their spiritual import; because they do not feel the answering calm of a tranquillized conscience; because they are

insensible to that holy peace which indicates the communion of a present God.

To what refuge will such men turn—what seed will such men sow? The wind, to reap the whirlwind! But "be not deceived, God is not mocked;" (Gal. vi. 7, 8;) "he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life." "Yea, saith the Psalmist, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God."

It was gracious in St. Paul, at this the close of his epistle, to set forth to us a doctrine so consolatory, and so essential to be known. The mind awed and oppressed by the burthen imposed upon the worshippers under the ancient dispensation, whose types and shadows were needful to be fulfilled in the new, might have shrunk from a task apparently so far beyond its power. But the inspired writer brings aid at the moment when succour is most required, and points to the substitution of great price, which a God of mercy and love has been pleased to accept of, reconciled to it by the blood of the everlasting covenant. Here are no requirements of the law, stunning the reason by their minuteness, or baffling hope by their impracticability, but precepts plain to all capacities, and feasible even by the weak in the flesh. He who alone procured for us pardon and reconciliation with God, by dying for us on the cross: he who

alone by his death purchased for us eternal life: he who alone by his sufferings made us perfect: his name the apostle calls on every Christian to confess, and through its holiness to offer the accepted sacrifice of fervent prayer. These are motives urgent and holy. Urgent—for the Lord of the vineyard cometh to require the fruit thereof, and will not tarry; and holy—in that he alone can sanctify its produce. He has revealed, through his inspired word, that he takes delight in our poor homage; surely this announcement might serve to encourage us to a diligent striving after all holy conversation and godliness. How incredibly foolish are they who neglect to implore of him to cleanse by his blood, the defilements of our inmost thoughts, and regenerate by his Spirit our polluted hearts. From the sanctified heart, as from some fountain healed by the salt of a prophet, will ever flow the streams of pure oblation. And yet, it is not that our thoughts be holy, and guileless lips give to them an untainted utterance; it is not that the unfeigned homage of the soul, pent up, and struggling to be free, bursts through the prison doors of the flesh, and escapes to liberty. No; it is neither of these which stamps a true value upon the believer's prayer; but it is that the interceding voice of the Saviour is heard to exclaim, "I pray for them." How precious the reflection, that even the still, small voice, pronounced by man in fear and deep humility, is by

Christ borne aloft into the sanctuary of the highest heaven. Christ himself receives it, and bids it swell the song of that angelic choir, who continually chant the praises of him that sitteth upon the throne, the Ancient of Days, who was and is, and is to come. These, O man, be thy recompense of exceeding great reward; these the unfailing promises God hath made through Christ, to such as love him and praise his name—promises which must engage, which must engross the warmest affections of the believing heart—promises which bestow on our humblest entreaties, a dignity and a price surpassing their intrinsic worthlessness. For the lips, else cold and inanimate, touched by the living fire from the altar where Christ presides—and which he is—kindle into a vivid flame of piety and love; and the incense of our imperfect petitions, whose dense wreaths now rest upon this nether world, borne upwards by the Spirit from above, fills with acceptable fragrance the courts of the eternal heavens. May God vouchsafe us his grace to feel these truths as we ought; and may an ever-abiding sense of his presence, and of the privilege we possess of addressing him in holy praise, unseal our closed lips, and give to our undoubting homage, the purity, the conviction, and the earnestness which should accompany the spiritual sacrifices of the persuaded Christian.

SERMON XIII.

HEB. xiii. 20, 21.

"Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever."

SUCH are the words in which the apostle bids the Hebrew church farewell.

He had asked of his converts, the tribute of their prayers; he returns the grateful offering of his own. "Pray for us, (he writes,) for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly, and pray that we may be restored to you."

St. Paul, in all his epistles, appears to attach a high value to the prayers of righteous men. We find him frequently bespeaking their intercession in his own behalf. Their entreaties at the throne of grace, constitute his solace in affliction, his strength on his journeys, and bestow boldness and energy on

the tongue appointed to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. And now, when he had woven a seamless vesture of incorruptible doctrine, he seeks a benediction upon his labours, asking in the affectionate communion which becometh saints, the prayers of a church won over to Christ. If St. Paul prized the prayers of other men so highly, how should we esteem his? He prays not alone from a heart overflowing with universal benevolence, but his judgment, mind, and soul, and strength, combine their forces, to take, as it were, heaven itself by violence; if so be he might gain some, for whose service he would consent to die.

Truly the breathings of Christian love, displayed in the text, denote the workings of most profound, most tender affection. He had walked amongst all men with unwavering course, having his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. He would not that the traces of his footsteps should be too soon erased; and therefore, bequeaths these his parting words, in the hope that they might tend to maintain a perpetual memory of his holy pilgrimage.

When we review the tenor of the whole epistle, concluded by the passage already cited, we may attain with less difficulty to a just estimate of its value. In truth, the passage we are considering, sums up at once the object and the doctrine of the entire letter; and in this scripture, as intelligible as it is solemn, the writer sets a seal to the bond of im-

perishable affection, with which, like his divine Master, "he loved his own, unto the end."

No language could better convey the sublime ardour of apostolic love, nor strengthen the assurance of its duration, among those on whom it was bestowed; no words could more fitly tell the attributes of that God, who sought reconciliation through the blood-shedding of his humbled Son.

And of such argument is the epistle composed. The call to the fathers by the prophets; the described danger of neglecting it. The priesthood of Christ reconciling man to God; his death, his resurrection, the efficacy of his blood exhibited above, its virtue in contributing towards the perfecting of the sanctified, and the exceeding weight of glory, which as a heavenly diadem, now shines for ever upon the brows of the exalted Saviour. These are the pearls of great price, which enrich and adorn the writings we treat of. May he who has brought us from darkness to this marvellous light, who can unstop the deaf ears, and unseal the blind eyes, and loose the captive tongue, now pour a blessing upon our labours, upon my poor endeavours to preach the word, on your zeal to hear it. So shall the godliness here set forth by the apostle, prove profitable to us, both in the life which now is, and in that mysterious eternity yet to be revealed. And so, when the gloom which hangs over our conception of the mighty scheme of redemption shall vanish before

the noontide sun of knowledge, and that which is now a dense cloud, darkening the immediate presence of Jehovah, shall become a light vail, to soften, but not hide his splendour, it may be our grateful privilege to confess how deep is the obligation we owe to that condensed epitome of Christian faith, and hope, and charity, which the Epistle to the Hebrews presents to our acceptance. But we have now concern with the text only. A summary indeed, as has been already observed, of the entire work, and a conclusion and moral of the preceding reasoning.

We would fain omit no portion, and yet it is impracticable, within the limits of one discourse, to comprise, so as to explain the various topics embraced. It shall therefore be my endeavour to dwell, as I best may, upon the most important, humbly imploring God's grace to fulfil this duty as I ought, either by myself or you.

And first, we may observe, that the apostle invites us to contemplate God in his attribute of peace, a God of peace. The great end of all human labour and strife is to attain to this consummation. For this, men make many a weary struggle ; and many an anxious thought harasses and disquiets the soul. For this, the turmoils and the hazards of life are encountered, and submitted to. Even in its hours of utmost activity, and disregard of the distant future, the mind casts before it some fond anticipa-

tions of repose. We hope that a term will arrive to our labours, that age will find rest, or time allay the violence of passion, or sooth the cares which embitter human life.

Flesh wars against spirit, spirit resisteth flesh, and evil propensities ceaselessly conflicting with those holier desires which descend from on high, maintain the interminable debate. Success brings no respite, age no calm; and man even to the latest hours of his earthly pilgrimage, remains the same as when he began it. The hand which struck the chords of a stripling's follies, draws forth in the declining years of life a feebler tone, but the note is still unchanged, the strings still vibrate the same sound, till all is hushed in the silence of death. Nor is this all; haply we are sometimes "found to fight against God," and to bar the gates on the undoubted Lord of the Vineyard. Indeed we may consider every guilty thought as an actual declaration of war against the Creator, and every perpetrated crime, as a public act of aggression upon his authority. To these rebellions, it is true, God puts a period, not indeed as we might expect by the intervention of some destroying angel, some executor of blasting wrath. Not so. Even in judgment he remembereth mercy, and when most offended thinks upon the covenant of peace and good will towards man. How then was this reconciliation effected? We know him to be the author of peace, and lover of

concord; but whence arose the reciprocal agreement which caused God and man to be confederate together? God found it in his beloved Son, and became reconciled through the blood of the everlasting Covenant. Christ came into the world to save sinners, to intervene as they fled, but fled in vain from the terrors of a pursuing God, and Christ, who is our peace, stayed the vengeance of the conqueror, and received in his own person the stroke of that wound by which we had else been slain.

And "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.) By this peace, our souls are brought into reconciliation with God, and our hearts and minds, before at enmity, are now in friendship, and kept in this state of reconciliation by the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus. Our Saviour saith, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace," that peace which passeth understanding, promised "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile;" they have peace with God through Christ; being spiritually minded, it rules in their hearts; they follow the things that make for it, for unto it God hath called us.

He hath called us to keep the unity of the Spirit by its bond; to be by it reconciled to our own consciences, to ourselves, and to him. The church of Christ, torn by internal divisions, troubled by false doctrine, heresy and schism, or endangered by foes

from without, prays for that peace which God alone can bestow. St. Paul pours a like benediction upon his early converts, introducing his epistles for the most part by such a wish as "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. i. 7.) And, brethren, let us devoutly pray the Giver of all good, that a lively sense of this free, this undeserved love and favor of God, may spring up and flourish for ever in our souls, yielding its precious fruits—the enjoyment of every blessing, and a firm and sure reliance on the protecting care of God. So shall the God of peace minister abundantly an entrance into that perfect rest which saints partake of in heaven; no enemies to alarm, no troubles to disquiet, no remorse of conscience to harass their eternal sabbath, when the righteous are taken away, they shall enter into peace.

In furtherance of that peace we have been considering, and to conduce to its fulfilment in earth and heaven, it pleased God, to lay our chastisements upon one. The flames of war, kindled by the disobedience of the first Adam, were extinguished in the blood of the Second, and the tree of knowledge, which, like the wisdom of this world, withered and vanished away, became a tree of life, when moistened by the stream which flowed from our blessed Saviour's side.

Bruised for our iniquities, wounded for our trans-

gressions, and dying for the sins of the whole world, the Lord of life and glory passed for a brief season from the surface to the nethermost parts of the earth; but the chains of death, fell riven and powerless from its illustrious victim, and the doors of the grave, which had opened to receive their visitor, again flew asunder, to set him free. If humble, pale and lifeless, he had been laid in their silent chambers, yet was his sojourn but of transient duration. His humiliation was quickly over: time sped its rapid course, and the Holy One, who saw no corruption, emerged in glory from the forsaken tomb. For he had declared himself to be the resurrection and the life, and professed that should the Jews destroy the temple of his body, "in three days he would raise it up." The text speaks of another influence exerted to accomplish this miracle, distinct in person, but one in essence, power and eternity: that power flowing from the first person, the God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead, "having loosed the pains of death, for it was not possible that he should be holden of it," (Acts, ii. 24,) nor yet was the Son inactive, for as the "Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." (John, v. 21.)

This quickening is accomplished through the independent power of Christ's Godhead, the same power which called the mouldering Lazarus from

the grave, and bid the dead maid arise. The characteristic of that power, which distinguished Christ from the prophets of old, consists in this: that Christ wrought miracles through his own authority, as one equal with the Father, while they through the name of the Lord their God, recovered the leper, or raised the dead. Likewise his apostles wrested the captives from the last enemy, through the name, and by the power of Jesus of Nazareth. In the passage before us, God is announced as effecting this by his own power, as the apostle Peter expresseth it, "Him hath God raised from the dead, and exalted to be a prince and a Saviour," (Acts v. 31,) and a reason is assigned such as cannot fail to awaken sentiments of solemn reflection in every Christian mind, that reason is, "the blood of the everlasting covenant." Now, the covenant was of no force while the object which sealed the contract lived, but Christ sealed the contract with his own blood, and therefore, it was necessary that he should die. And he did die, that the covenant might be perfected, and died, not as an unwilling victim, but voluntarily. "I lay down my life, that I might take it up again." (John x. 17.) When the covenant was ratified by his death, there was no obstacle to his rising again; the terms of treaty had been fulfilled, and the resurrection of the party at once victim and contractor, did not annul them. "Therefore," saith he, "I lay down my life, not to die

eternally; but I lay it down to take it up again." "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." These Scriptures are in accordance with the primary signification of the term covenant; which implied a friendly explanation of the terms of an agreement, and was ratified by the slaying of beasts, between whose parted members the contracting parties passed. It is probable, likewise, that among the Jews, as with other nations, they imprecated upon those who violated the compact, a fate such as the victim suffered. Many of the metaphorical expressions contained in the sacred volume, lend countenance to this opinion, as for example, in the book of Genesis, we are informed that the Lord will "cut off that soul that hath broken his covenant," (Gen. xvii. 14,) and again, wrath is denounced according to the "curses of the covenant," (Deut. xxix. 21,) and of the mode in which covenants were wont to be made, it is spoken in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, "the people which had entered into covenant," (Jer. xxxiv. 10,) and so forth. From these we might, I think, infer the ancient practice, and somewhat of its typical bearing, illustrated by the phrases of the apostle, and satisfactorily denoting the part assigned to our Redeemer.

In the New Testament, the reciprocal relation of

the parties undergoes the change consequent upon one of them holding the twofold capacity of party and victim. The covenant could not take effect before the death of Christ, who was the victim, and therefore Christ died; but the covenant could not benefit a dead party, and therefore Christ rose again and lived. He was, besides, the mediator or middle term between God and man, as man's Redeemer; but, as man's representative, he was a contracting party, and entered into a covenant, which man could not do. Now, this covenant was an agreement between God and man, wherein God promised salvation to all who believe in Christ. But what pledge could man offer that he would fulfil, on his part, the terms of the engagement? It is plain that he had nothing to offer. Hence, if Christ had not become our surety, no covenant could have been made. He is then Victim, Mediator, Party, and Pledge. In all these senses he is brought again from the dead. Wonderful, indeed, is this great mystery of godliness, and well might holy men of old desire to see these things which we see, and angels stoop to look into the secrets of hidden mercy. The gracious purpose of God in Christ hath revealed them all to us, and poured upon the darkness of the world's shadow, rays of that eternal sunshine which beams as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel. Yes, brethren, the glorious light is now in its high meridian, lighting, with direct power,

every soul of man that will receive it, and imparting a glowing warmth to every believing breast.

The hardened heart of unbelief may refuse to entertain these truths, and cold indifference or hollow profession disdain the unvailings of heavenly love; but who that longs to know even as he is known—who that desires to see his Saviour face to face, and sighs for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, but will rejoice with trembling to discern, by the eye of faith, the least of these mercies, and will gladly follow that great Shepherd of the sheep, brought again from the dead?

The apostle tells us, that this our Shepherd has been brought again by the blood of the everlasting covenant. This phrase is susceptible of a double interpretation. It may intimate, either that Christ was brought back from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant, or that he became the great Shepherd of the sheep by that blood. Holy Scripture, as it appears to me, gives countenance to either meaning. It must, I conceive, be admitted, that the obedience evinced by Christ in his human nature, suffering a bloody death upon the cross, which blood was shed in covenant with the Father, procured for him a resurrection, or bringing again, from the dead. We shall see this point more clearly, if we bear in mind what the Holy Spirit saith, speaking through the apostle. To this end was he manifested to the world, "that whosoever believeth in him might not perish,

but have everlasting life." (John, iii. 16.) Therefore, to confirm this belief, or indeed to make plain the ground of it, he must of necessity have been brought again from the dead; for if Christ be not risen from the dead, then is all faith vain. But that he should be brought again, we had the guarantee of his blood, upon which God's promise was made. God sware a faithful oath, from which he hath not shrank, that his Holy One should see no corruption. Nor hath he forgotten the words uttered from the heavenly canopy—"I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."

Or we may, with equal probability, assume, that Jesus was constituted the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

St. Paul, in his parting address to the elders at Ephesus, exhorts them to feed the flock, or church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood—(Acts, xx. 28,)—the purchased possession of the household of faith, which Jesus the Saviour laid down his life to procure; for he himself saith, "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep: and none but the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep: for the hireling, whose own the sheep are not, fleeth, because he is an hireling."

Then the test of being a good shepherd is the laying down his life for the sheep, or a readiness so to do; but Christ did actually lay down his life, for

merely a willingness, unless the act had been completed, would have availed nothing; and in this he became, above all shepherds, the Great Shepherd. Nor is the objection of any weight, that so soon as the shepherd lays down his life, he ceases from his office. Christ has obviated it, in that he saith, "I lay down my life, that I may take it up again." And further—"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." (John, x. 16.)

It is plain, that this distant flock was only to be brought in by blood—by that blood which was their ransom; and if so, we may deem it as proved, that the title of Shepherd was obtained through that blood; nor alone of Shepherd, but also of chief Shepherd; or, as St. Peter styles him, "the great Shepherd of the sheep, the Captain of salvation," distinct from, and exalted far above all other ministers, who but echo the voice that proceeds from him. Like echo, they do not originate sound, but repeat the words of him who speaketh—like echo, they require the continual renewing of that voice, else they have no power of utterance. Happy the minister who receives, from the Primal Source, an unabated supply—happy the people who listen with humble hearts to the heavenly call. Theirs are the promises, and theirs the oracles of God, and theirs the protecting arm, which shields their regenerate hearts from every foe; the guardian angel bearing

the flaming sword which turns every way to keep the avenue of the tree of life.

Further, in whatsoever sense we receive the covenant herein treated of, whether as bringing again Christ from the dead, or as constituting him the great Shepherd, on one point we are quite assured, that it is everlasting.

It endures, and will endure, through all time ; not a covenant of works, perishing with a fallen temple or extinct law ; nor yet that preceding compact by which the children of Israel were brought from the slavery of Egypt into the freedom and repose of Canaan ; for this too passed away as a vapour, and the nation, once the object and partaker of the blessing, now wanders over the face of earth, a stranger and a pilgrim, without a country to bear its name, ofttimes without an inheritance it can call its own.

But this covenant is everlasting ; for it is sealed by the blood which flows continually in heaven before the footstool of mercy. That blood was in the human life of Christ, and it flowed unto death ; but the power which fashioneth man beneath in the earth, and writes his members in a book, bade the suspended current resume its flow in the deserted veins, and it burst forth anew through the vail of his flesh, the seal of a covenant as lasting as his priesthood, and the pledge of redemption, like himself, eternal.

Moreover, this is the new testament in his blood,

which he offered to his disciples the night before he suffered, in the cup of blessing filled with the promise of endless life, with which "he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." To this covenant none other can or will succeed, for all believers are, through it, reconciled eternally to God. In all respects, therefore, the covenant of blood, and of the power noticed in the text, was everlasting.

Lastly, we have here our Saviour presented to our regard, in his triple capacity. A Prophet raised up from amongst us, in that he setteth forth to the sheep of his fold the words of eternal life—a Priest entering into holy places, with the blood of the everlasting covenant, and a King, recognized under the title of the Lord Jesus. Blessed is the man who so receiveth the Saviour. Around his path, a light shineth—about his bed a watch is set; God is in all his ways, and ministering angels strengthen the feeble knees, and upraise the fallen hands, and cheer the fainting pilgrim as he plods over the rugged paths of salvation.

So far, brethren, we have sought to trace a brief outline of the doctrine promulgated by the apostle. We now reach his prayer—a prayer radiant in all the surpassing affection characteristic of one impressed with the obligation of Christian love. "May the God of peace (saith the holy writer) make you perfect in

every good work to do his will." Such are the affectionate, such the benevolent terms used by him who was not a whit behind the chief of the apostles.

What a lesson of humility do they teach to the pride and arrogance of man—what a sweet offering are they for his humility to bestow. If any other fountain for uncleanness had existed, then had the prayer been superfluous—if this fountain should fail to cleanse, then were the prayer uninspired. But he (the apostle) in whom measureless love gave it birth, had in himself experienced its necessity and efficacy, and so offered it in behalf of his converts; for he knew that by nature they were not only imperfect, but inapt for every good work.

Rough stones, unshapen from the quarry, and little suited to compose any portion of the fabric of Christ's church: members indeed of the body, but far from "being fitly joined together by that which every joint supplieth"—(Ephes. xiv. 16,)—branches of the parent stem, but with feeble shoots and withering foliage. He prays, therefore, as he had already done for the Corinthians, "That they might be perfect, of good comfort, of one mind, that they might live in peace, and that the God of love and of peace might be with them (2 Cor. xiii. 11): and as he writes to the Thessalonians, "That he might perfect that which is lacking in their faith." (1 Thess. iii. 10.)

So then, not only were they imperfect in good

works, but even in their faith; and they could not remedy the defects by any efforts of their own. But St. Paul shows, that God would "work in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure;" and confirm them unto the end, that they might be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus. And in this they are perfect, in that the Spirit of God and of Christ, which, "if a man hath not, he is none of his," operateth, in forming them to perfection in good works.

This perfection consists of two parts, a perfection in the mode and a perfection of motive. Now, these works, to be pleasing or acceptable in the sight of God, must follow after justification; and this necessity will of itself involve both consequences; for the mode will be under the influence of the indwelling Spirit, and the motive can only spring from the suggestions of grace. The apostle further points out the tendency of this perfecting in every good work, which is to do the will of God. Indeed we could scarcely suppose it to possess any other.

The ultimate object of all Christian effort, the end of all prayer, the hope, and the high vocation to which we are called, is to do the will of God. God is represented in the text as uniting his own endeavours with the strivings of believers to enable them to do his will. St. Peter prays in behalf of the churches—"May the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after

that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Pet. v. 10.) This is of like effect with that of St. Paul, now under our consideration.

We can conceive that God operates upon our minds, disposing us to do his will, both by external manifestations of the material creation, and by the internal abiding of his Holy Spirit; and we know that both one and the other tend to infuse a good will, and work in us, when we have that good will; for the grace of God is all powerful in its efficacy, to fit us for every good work, and also in cooperation to aid our performance of it. It is therefore, from God that the capacity results, of doing things well-pleasing in his sight, human nature being incompetent to the task if left to itself. How mysterious, how awful, yet how full of comfort is this doctrine. It eludes our conception concerning the state of probation in which we are placed on earth, and baffles the inferences we are most inclined to deduce from the acknowledged freedom of the will. For we are first assured that we must do things pleasing in the sight of God, or perish everlastingly. And secondly, that while it is only through the prevailing efficacy of God's grace, these things can be done, that grace will not be denied us. There is indeed, this limitation, if it can properly be so called; that however requisite be our works of well-pleasing, however gra-

cious the bestowal of heavenly aid, none are or can be effectual or received, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ.

On this doctrine the apostle takes his stand—by the horns of this altar he holds—other foundation can no man lay—other sacrifices God refuses to accept—this is the lasting consolation which he who loved us gave—the hope, the solace, and the stay of tottering humanity. "The Lord (sayeth St. Paul to his convert Timothy) stood with me, and strengthened me: and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom; (Tim. ii. 4, 17, 18.) and "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, he has promised to be with his Church to the end of the world." (Rev. i. 5.) Thus is the believer armed to fight the good fight of faith. God places in his hand the sword of the Spirit; Christ presents to him the shield of faith; and ministering angels crown him with the helmet of salvation. The language used by the apostle is not unworthy of our attention. He might have confined himself to saying, may the God of peace make you perfect; but he introduces this attribute of the Deity in company with its most important exercise—namely, the bringing again from the dead, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the

sheep. What can more distinctly reveal the only means through which the power to do the will of God is attainable, or point with greater precision to the insufficiency of all human endeavour. The finger of the Eternal thus significantly notices how only his majesty is approachable. First, that through faith in Christ, we must be born again from the dead, and rise in newness of life, which regeneration flows from his grace alone, and is manifested by him who was the first fruits of the resurrection. Secondly, that without the call and guidance of the great Shepherd of the sheep, the whole flock must have strayed. Thence doth it appear, that through the death of Christ, through his resurrection, through his leading along the way stained by the blood of the everlasting covenant, an avenue lies open to the favour of a God of peace.

Oh! you whose hearts have long been at enmity with that God; you whose perverse wanderings do despite unto the Spirit of his grace, and who count the blood of the covenant, wherewith you are sanctified, an unholy thing, I beseech you, ponder on these doctrines.

Some, indeed, there are, alas! too many, who take no note of time; heedless how life passes, and only conscious that it in truth is passing, they commit themselves to its silent stream. Flowery mead, and verdant lawn, spread their fair attractions along

the delusive shore—the sun shines, the gentle breezes fan, the silvery waters display bright expanse—and the unconcerned victim of indolence and folly is borne upon his way.

But who warns him to shun the foaming cataract of heaven's wrath—who calls to him to let fall the anchor of the soul, ere his vessel be drawn over the brink—who bids him gaze on the infatuated multitudes hourly disappearing before his eyes? Need I answer, brethren, that the witness of God in his thoughts tells him all, and much more. That the gospel tells him—that its ministers tell him, beseeching him in Christ's stead. But oh! my dear friends, how cheerful is the believer's progress; on his path, through the dark air of this world, a light shineth which he knows how to comprehend. Christ himself, with his pierced hands trims the lamps which faith and piety place upon the altar of his sacrifice; and the olive of him who is our peace, anoints the head, and maketh glad the countenance of the man who desires to see him with open face.

Thus has God spoken in his holiness—and thus in holiness shall believers draw nigh to behold the beauty of his temple; for God is not unmindful of his covenant, nor a man, that he should lie.

With the hallelujah which concludes the text, the believer will delight to join; none but the believer

can join, for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) To Jesus be glory for ever and ever. The sacred name may not be profaned by impure lips, nor the eternal presence approached but through the Redeemer's blood.

Sealed by the Spirit, the ransomed flock is known; newly washed in the laver of regeneration, and following, with full obedience, the Shepherd of their souls.

To the elucidation of that Shepherd in his person and offices, the epistle which we have now closed is specially directed. It binds together, by the golden cords of love, the old and new covenant. The law of works seeks a sanction from the promises of grace; and grace, through faith, makes acceptable the labours of man.

It has been my task to offer such portions of it to your notice, as seemed to me best fitted to develop in order, the whole counsel of God in the mighty plan of redemption. To me it appears, that the suppression of the epistle to the Hebrews, would have materially—dare I say incurably—injured the entire body of Scripture. We will, I have no doubt, admit that the priesthood of Christ, and the typical sacrifice which foreshewed the one oblation once offered, had been at least comparatively obscure without it.

We forbear to assign limits to the Divine manifestations rewarding spiritual industry, and earnest prayer; but it is scarcely beyond our province to infer that the heavenly gift would not have been so fully tasted. In fact, the ceremonies of the Mosaic institutions might have been but a shapeless and unseemly pile, of no obvious utility, or fixed design, had not the rays of the Divine intelligence been directed upon them, and shown the name of Christ engraved upon the portal.

If, then, these things be so—if this the profit, "much every way," which stimulates the industry, and becomes the high reward of whosoever searches diligently, and in faith, the Scripture of this epistle. May the Giver of all good bestow on all people an earnest desire to know, hearts to believe, and strength to abide in all its righteousness. It treats of wondrous doctrines, and mighty mysteries; of doctrines hidden for ages in the deep counsels of the Eternal wisdom; and of mysteries veiled from human eyes by the clouded majesty of the First Cause. But these secret things, which belong to God, are made known through joint heirship with Christ; and the awful presence of Jehovah is rendered approachable through the mediation of the Incarnate Son.

Him we have sought to trace in the respective headings of our several discourses. He hath in

these latter days spoken unto us. "He was made lower than the angels, that he might taste of death for every man." (Heb. ii. 9.) "He was made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation." (ii. 17.) He was "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." (iii. 1.) This "High Priest is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." (viii. 1.) "He appears in the presence of God for us." (ix. 24.) "He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (ix. 26.) "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (x. 14.) "He gives us boldness to enter into the holiest by a new and living way." (x. 19.) "He speaketh from heaven." (xii. 25.) He hath procured that "we receive a kingdom which cannot be moved." (xii. 28.) He hath also procured acceptance for our "sacrifice of prayer and praise." (xiii. 15.) And he hath obtained the title of the "Great Shepherd of the sheep, brought again from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." (xiii. 20.) To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God the Father, in his infinite mercy, hath adopted these means to manifest his own power and holiness, and has thus revealed to the world the efficacy of that one sacrifice for sin.

On these means we are bound to bestow, unhe-

sitating reverence and submission: doubtless in wisdom hath he made them all.

Infidel man may deride that Omniscience which could stoop to particularize the minutia of drapery, or the component portions of the incense. But what is there in man, which to Omniscience must not seem as insignificant as the drapery of the tabernacle, or the incense of the altar?

Shall we scoff at the care which ordained these typical patterns, yet rejoice that the hairs of our head are all numbered?

In truth, nothing is valueless in the eyes of God, which may tend to bring us nearer to himself. He hath shown how high the price he sets upon the human soul, when he sent his Son to redeem it from destruction.

Then, surely, brethren, we cannot ourselves be indifferent to those objects which have engaged the attention of the Eternal Mind, or destroy by our infatuated carelessness, that immortal principle for which Christ died. Oh! may that be far from us. May the Almighty Ruler of all creation, lighten our darkness, strengthen our feet, and guide us in the way everlasting. May he bestow on us such out-pourings of his grace, that we shall be enabled to see with all saints, what we are, and what, through Christ, we may become; so that when an assembled universe shall stand before the throne and the Lamb,

we may, through the free bounty of redeeming love, claim heaven for our inheritance, as sons of God—and enter into the kingdom which contains the treasure—early, long, and always the sighed for object of our uplifted hearts.

THE END.

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